

Talking Points  
Madam Sisomboun Ounavong  
Director General - Department of International Cooperation/Ministry of Planning and  
Investment, Lao PDR  
Economic and Social Council  
Operational Activities for Development Segment  
ECOSOC Chamber, New York, 28 February to 2 March 2017

Session 1

Building a stronger UN development system for delivering on the 2030 agenda - 28 February 2017

**What system-wide actions are most needed to enable better collective support and integrated approaches in the way the UNDS operates and is organised to maximise its impact at global, regional and country level?**

Bringing perspectives from Lao PDR, I would like to make a contribution to the discussion over system-wide actions as follows.

First of all, as the world is rapidly changing and delivering results and impacts is a complex process, it is important that **the UN Development System has to move towards the modern and agile system**. In doing so, first and foremost step is to think about further harmonisation and simplification of business practices. Traditional model of carrying development work, policy dialogue, technical assistance and other related tasks needs to be modified towards more client focused approach.

Secondly, **alignment is not only about ensuring strategic frameworks and policies are responding to the country needs and priorities but it is also about use of country systems**. As you know development cooperation that uses country systems can provide incentives and momentum to strengthen their capacity and performance, enhance domestic accountability mechanisms, and contribute to better Public Financial Management practices.

Thirdly, **investment in staff development and high calibre staff with skill sets is critical for the UNDS to perform on what is expected to deliver**. With a much more complex and broader set of challenges, transformative and empowered leadership at global, regional and country levels is much needed. This requires leadership which is supported by strong knowledge and expertise, attuned to country realities. Specifically, at the country level, greater use of national experts and national staff are vital to ensure meaningful reforms and sustainable outcomes.

Fourthly, the performance of the UNDS depends on its **ability to mobilize adequate and high quality funding** to perform its core functions and maintain its absolute and comparative advantage. The ambition of the 2030 agenda does challenge the UNDS to move beyond a year-by-year, sector-by-sector, project-by-project approach to sustainable and predictable funding and towards a medium-term more robust categorization approach model. To this end, it is important to explore innovative financing modalities and enhance transparency and accountability of funding flows.

Fifthly, with diverse forms that partnership can take, **it is vital that the UNDS has to engage in partnership in strategic, effective and efficient manner**. We need to keep in mind that impartiality uniquely positions the UNDS to support development cooperation including south-south and triangular cooperation and other forms of cooperation. At the same time, creating greater partnerships require trust from stakeholders involved.

**What is the UN development system expected to deliver in your country and for your country? Has the system effectively aligned its work with the 2030 Agenda? If not, what are your expectations from the system?**

In essence, the Government of Lao PDR expects the UNDS in the country to help and support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to fight against poverty and to lift the country out of LDC status. This will need to be done within the framework of our 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020), 10-Year Development Strategy 2016-2025 and Vision 2030.

To achieve these, the UNDS in the country should focus on:

- Integrated normative support for implementation, monitoring and reporting on SDGs
- Integrated, evidence-based policy advice to localize and mainstream SDGs into our national and provincial planning process. In particular, linking SDG based national planning and budgetary processes.
- Capacity development and technical assistance which are necessary to build both national and provincial capacities to deliver SDGs.
- Convening of stakeholders across development spectrum, leveraging of partnerships and facilitating knowledge sharing.
- Comprehensive and disaggregated data collection and analysis

In the Lao PDR, we believe that the UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021 provides the overall framework for the United Nations in the country to collectively respond to the national development priorities and ensure synergies between UN agencies.

The UNPF is developed through consultation with Government, international development partners, civil society, the public and others, taking into account an analysis of progress towards the MDGs, the SDGs, the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020 and the comparative advantages of the UN.

The UN Country Team and the Government will jointly monitor the progress of the UNPF as part of their commitments to aid effectiveness and accountability.

We are of the view that strong commitment to coordination and harmonization of the UN Country Team is needed in order to work more closely together as a team through Delivering as One aiming at increasing effectiveness and efficiency and lowering the transaction costs. In addition, we hope to see the UN Country Team increasingly speak in a common voice on key issues—either through the UN Resident Coordinator or through a lead agency. In this context, it is vital to strengthen the role of the UN Resident Coordinator

**For its part, the Lao Government has introduced a mechanism called “the Round Table Process” chaired by the Government and Co-Chaired by the UN/UNDP which provides a forum for high-level Government officials and representatives of Development Partners and other stakeholders – private sectors, civil society and others to discuss and provide practical policy recommendations to ensure effectiveness of development cooperation for achieving the national development goals including the SDGs.**