

Welcome Remarks by H.E. Mr. Soubanh SRITHIRATH, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office cum Chairman of LCDC, at the Ministerial Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control, Vientiane, 24 May 2011

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His Excellency Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of Delegation,  
Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is privilege and an honour for me, on behalf of the Ministerial Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control, to specially welcome the presence of H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR . Your Excellency's presence in this Opening Ceremony demonstrates clearly the attention and the importance the Government of the Lao PDR and the Prime Minister Yourself have placed in the fight against narcotic drug production, abuse and trafficking. Our warm welcome and sincere appreciations go also to the Head of delegations, all distinguished guests and delegation's members and Observers for taking time and attending this important Meeting.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates and observers,

It has been already two years since our last successful meeting in Hua Hin, Thailand, where our MOU members considered and decided their joint action against drug problems aiming at reducing the scourge of drugs in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). Our MOU member countries have earnestly promoted cooperation by jointly and systematically implement the Sub-regional Action plan. Despite our efforts of consistently fighting drugs in close cooperation among our MOU member countries and international community, so far, we have not been able to completely eradicate it. The dramatic spread and increase of illicit drug trafficking and abuse, particularly ATS, heroin, and other drugs are still serious

cause of concern to our members. Our current meeting is, therefore, another shared effort of the countries in the GMS to consider and review various issues as included in the Agenda. In this regard, our deliberation should focus on exchanging views on how to ensure that all commitments and goals of the Sub-regional Action plan can be brought to fruition.

Excellencies,

At this juncture, I would like to renew our sincere appreciation for the cohesive solidarity and unity shown as well as the active contribution made by all members of the Group, I would also like to commend the spirit of cooperation of our Partners as well as our donor community, particularly Japan and Australia for alternatively chairing Mini-Dublin Group in the Lao PDR. We cannot but appreciate once again, the effective overall coordination and technical support of UNODC.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I firmly believe that one of the key factors for the success of the implementation of the Sub-regional Action Plan remains to be the attainment of necessary financing. Experience has shown that well-designed programmes with no commensurate financing support have proven to be difficult to be executed. Therefore, I am hopeful that donor countries and agencies, in keeping with their commitment that narcotic drugs is an international issue, would further show their sympathy and give greater importance to assisting MOU member countries in fighting the scourge of drugs.

We, the signatory countries to the 1993 MOU, of course stand ready to do what we can further our cooperation with all development partners and International Organizations to make a reality to the Sub regional Action Plan.

As far as Laos is concerned, we are ready to continue our cooperation with other signatory countries. Concurrently, we will do our best to find ways and

means to struggle against drugs so as to ensure a bright future for Lao young generations.

Finally, I would like to conclude my welcome remarks by wishing H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, very good health and happiness. Likewise, I would also like to wish all of you, distinguished delegates and observers an enjoyable and memorable stay in the Lao PDR, good health and every success.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to invite H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, to deliver his Inaugural Statement to open the Ministerial Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control among Lao PDR, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and UNODC.

Please, the floor is yours, Excellency.