

**Inaugural remarks by H.E.Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of
the Lao PDR, at the Opening Ceremony of the Ministerial Meeting of the
Signatory Countries to the 1993 MOU on Drug Control
Vientiane, 24 May 2011**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

I am very pleased to be kindly invited to deliver inaugural remarks to the Ministerial Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control which is hosted today in Vientiane Capital. On behalf of the Lao government, I would like to take this opportunity to express my warmest welcome and sincere thanks to all Heads of delegations and delegates attending this significant gathering upon our invitation.

The Lao government considers this meeting as a landmark as it is held at a time when governments in the world are urgently exerting efforts in tackling drugs issue.

Distinguished delegates,

As we all are aware that countries in the world are encountering important problems which need both short and long-term solutions. Drugs issue, among others, attracts much of our concerns as narcotic drugs are a collective mankind scourge which greatly poses negative impacts on the socio-economic development and are the source of inevitable social evils.

For these reasons, countries and the international community are actively seeking ways and means to resolve this problem. However, there are yet to be effective means and measures that definitely ensure the achievement in suppressing and tackling drugs issue.

And as we all know, opium production has seen a decreasing trend for a while, the problem then relapses and has seen an increasing trend. Additionally, the illicit trafficking and trading of methamphetamines and other Amphetamine-Type of Stimulants and its precursors which are well concealed in order to circumvent the inspection by relevant officers are increasing; the number of drug users is also on the rise. Drug abuse varies in methods but the most risky one is sharing injecting drug needles which results in a number of infections and transmission of HIV/AIDS.

All this clearly indicates that drugs issue constitutes a major problem that threatens humankind. Therefore, the solution to the problem is not an individual responsibility of any,

particular country. I earnestly hope that this meeting will be an opportunity for us to discuss and find the ways and means for resolving drugs issue with effectiveness and sustainability. The Lao government is ready to fully support the concerted drug control efforts of the international community as well as of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Distinguished delegates,

Likewise in the past, the Lao government has strongly committed to struggling against drugs problems by taking preventive, suppressive and curative measures. In addition, the effective struggle against drugs requires cohesive and resolute actions. Most importantly, comprehensive law enforcement and share responsibility must be ensured as drugs issue, in its nature, is an international issue and sans frontiere.

I have the view that mutual assistance and cooperation either technically or financially are objectively indispensable for achieving the fruitful solution to the scourge of drugs.

The Lao government is strongly committed to cooperating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in setting up a National Drug Control Master Plan which is scheduled for the 2009-2013 period. The master plan includes nine programmes which I would not go for further details at this moment. Nevertheless, I believe that the implementation of such programmes will result in a gradual reduction in drugs problem in the Lao PDR, thus contributing to realizing a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2015 as expected and planned.

Distinguished delegates,

This meeting will provide an opportunity for us to assess the achievements gained, the strengths, weaknesses and shortcomings of and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Sub-regional Action Plan VII which was approved at the previous meetings. In addition, we will design and approve, at this meeting, the future directions and plans of action which will be served as reference and guidelines for the cooperation in dealing with drug problems in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Finally, I would like to wish the Ministerial Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control a brilliant success.

May I wish you all, Excellencies and Distinguished delegates, good health and success in your noble tasks.

On this auspicious occasion, I declare the Ministerial Meeting opened from now on.

-Thank you-