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LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Statement

by

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of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations**

**On agenda item 4: Implementation of recommendations on
the six mandated areas of the Forum and on the
Millennium Development Goals
(f) Human Rights
at the sixth session of the United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

New York, 18 May 1007

(Please check against delivery)

Madame Chairperson,

The delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is greatly honoured to address this important Forum. We commend you for your re-election and wish you and all members of your Bureau every success in the discharge of your respective mandate.

Madame Chair,

In recent years, there have been allegations that violations of human rights were being committed against the Hmong (Lao Soung or Highland Lao) in Laos. Worse still, some groups of ill-perceived individuals living overseas, having been out of touch with our country for over three decades and invariably motivated by politics of a by-gone era, who do not understand the reality of the Lao PDR, have tried to blame it in various ways and disseminated information alleging that the Lao Government has carried out ethnic cleansing war and genocide against Hmong people. These allegations are utterly false and groundless. They were merely fabricated with the sole purpose of damaging the good image and reputation of the Lao PDR in the international arena.

Since the liberation of the country, the Lao Government, within its limited capacity, has done every thing possible to promote and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of its multi-ethnic Lao people. It has dearly upheld the rule of law and at the same time, has exerted all possible efforts to consolidate the national unity and cohesion of the people. No less important, the Government has worked and continues to work to preserve and promote the fine customs and culture of all ethnic groups.

Since 1975, the Hmong together with the other Lao ethnic groups have enjoyed independence and freedom and become the true rulers of the country. Administrative power is in the hands of the multi-ethnic people; All ethnic groups are equal before the law, and live in harmony with each other. Article 8 of the Constitution of the Lao PDR provides that the State shall pursue a policy of solidarity and equality between the country's ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the right to preserve and develop their fine traditions and those of the nation. All acts of division or discrimination between ethnic groups are prohibited. The State shall implement all necessary measures to develop and raise the economic and social standards of all ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the policy with respect to ethnic groups was set out in 1981 in the relevant resolution of the Political Bureau of the Party, and in particular concerning the Hmong, in the Party's Central Committee's 1992 resolution on ethnic activities.

As a result of the fair and equitable policy towards them, the lives of all the country's ethnic groups have gradually improved, both materially and morally, and they have the opportunity of participating in the government of the country. The Hmong in particular have contributed to the progress and the overall transformation of the Lao nation. They are present at all levels of government: 9.4 per cent of the members of the Central Committee of the Party, nearly 5 per cent of members of the Government, 9 per cent of members of Parliament, 16 per cent of governors of provinces and 13 per cent of the members of the Lao Front for National Reconstruction are Hmong. Some hold high office: Political Bureau of the Party, Chairman of the General Inspection Committee of the Party and the States, Vice-President of

the National Assembly, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Secretaries of State or the equivalent, governors of provinces, district chiefs, officer in the higher echelons of the army and police, directors of national educational establishments and hospitals, and diplomats.

In addition, 20 per cent of the combatants recognized as national heroes in the struggle against the imperialist aggressors were Hmong. Most of them demonstrated their heroism against the special forces of Vang Pao (a former old regime General and operator of the clandestine Heroin factory in Laongcheng, Northern part of Laos) during the war of national liberation.

Today, the Hmong play an important role in the country's social and economic development. As a result of the successful implementation by the Lao Government of a fair and equitable policy in building up solidarity among ethnic groups in order to ensure the cohesiveness of the multi-ethnic Lao people, the Hmong and other ethnic groups are able to live a life of peace and tranquility. Their lives and their situation are similar to those of other groups; there are those who are rich and those who are poor among them. The problem occupying the Lao Government's attention at the present is to improve the living conditions both among the Hmong and the other ethnic groups in the country and to help them fight poverty resulting from the protracted and destructive war of aggression.

The Lao Government has attaches great importance to opium poppy eradication and the removal of the unexploded ordnance (UXO) or "the killer toys" which still heavily affect the lives of the Lao multi-ethnic people and prevent them from making progress in pursuit of MDGs. In implementing this policy, the Government has benefited from fruitful cooperation with friendly countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations which realize the real situation of the Lao PDR and which see that the Government's policy towards ethnic groups is fair and equitable.

The foregoing suffices to illustrate the fairness of the Lao PDR. However, due to its least developed and landlocked status, its people's living standard remains modest. Nevertheless, in its policy, the Lao PDR makes no distinction between its various ethnic groups; all those born in the country- except for aliens- are considered without discrimination as Lao citizens.

The State protects the legitimate rights and interests of its citizens of all ethnic groups including Hmong, and will take resolute measures, as it deems necessary when the national security is in jeopardy. In Laos, in an effort to gradually build the country into a state of law, whoever commits an act or acts, which violate the laws and regulations of the country, regardless of the ethnic origin he or she emanates from, will be punished, without exception according to the law.

It is our sincere hope that the international community would have better understanding of the Lao PDR Government's fair and equitable policy toward its ethnic groups and continue to lend a helping hand to the Lao people in the efforts to meet their development objectives, thus benefiting all the Lao ethnic groups.

I thank you, Madame Chair.