

# Opening Statement at the SEACAP Practitioners Meeting

Vientiane, 4 November 2008

## H.E. Minister Sommad Pholsena – Ministry of Public Works and Transport

Good Morning Excellencies, Distinguished International and National Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

### WELCOME !

First of all let me express my heartfelt gratitude to all Excellencies, and Honoured Guests for coming, many of you have traveled great distances to attend this third SEACAP Practitioners Meeting.

There are representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Britain, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam as well as consultants from several other countries. On behalf of my Ministry I welcome you all.

I wish to thank SEACAP for the honour of bringing this meeting to Laos PDR. I appreciate the hard work contributed by the organizing committee from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) and SEACAP management.

### Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by briefing you on the relevant transport situation in Laos PDR.

### TRANSPORT

The MPWT is the authority for all transport development and management in Laos PDR. The National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy's (NGPES) focuses the Government's poverty reduction efforts on four sectors, one of which is transport. The goal of the transport sector is to fully integrate the economy, thereby providing an enabling environment for trade and commerce and access for all Lao people to basic services.

#### Road Network

The approximate total length of the road network is 32,600 kms. At 0.14 km/km<sup>2</sup>, Lao has one of the lowest road densities in the region. The network includes 7,100 km of national and another 7,200 of provincial roads. The rest consists of Urban, District and the Local roads. Unfortunately, most of the road system in Laos is in poor condition. Only about half of the national road network is currently paved, with the remainder having gravel or earth surfaces.

The government is engaged in a comprehensive infrastructure development plan encompassing all classes of roads in the country. With assistance from World Bank, ADB, SIDA and others a concerted effort is being made to improve the roads to a "maintainable" standard and generate the funds to maintain them thereafter.

#### Local Roads

The local road network is estimated at an aggregate length of more than 15,400km. At present much of this network consists of only tracks passable in the dry season. This situation is hampering poverty reduction and rural development.

An important target of the NGPES is to provide all villages with access roads by the year 2020. This will have a major positive impact on the social-economic integration of the country. This will be an expensive undertaking and we must do all that we can to make good decisions that will ensure sustainability.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With your permission, I wish to give you our Ministry's views on SEACAP.

### **SEACAP**

As you may know, Laos PDR is a major partner in the SEACAP programme, with a substantial number of projects implemented in cooperation the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Sida. I wish to express to the participants at this meeting, my appreciation of SEACAP for making important contributions to the progress of Laos's local roads program.

In Laos, SEACAP is under the overall coordination of a MPWT Steering Committee. The Committee has effectively guided SEACAP's integration into the Government's local road program and thus has ensured that SEACAP is addressing the priority issues.

In Laos PDR, SEACAP has focused on:

- Sustainable and appropriate technologies for local road surfacing and paving and for slope stability management;
- Appropriate standards, specifications and guidelines for developing local roads; and,
- International and domestic knowledge, experience and information exchanges.

I appreciate SEACAP's pragmatism, responsiveness, and quality of assistance. These features have made SEACAP able to provide timely and effective inputs. This is critical as we are working at an accelerated pace to meet our national development objectives.

Indeed SEACAP is assisting with the principle area of concern for us, which is the problem of the sustainability. We must ensure the optimum performance of our increasingly large investments. We need SEACAP to continue and to expand its support towards establishing a sound knowledge base for good decision making and implementation practice.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to stress that we have arranged this Meeting to provide opportunities for extensive interaction and participation. This meeting is for us - the SEACAP practitioners, and it is up to us to share our experiences and make it a success.

I wish to thank the presenters and facilitators in advance for their inputs to the Practitioners Meeting. I realize that you are all very busy and appreciate that you have made this a priority activity.

Finally, I wish Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen a successful meeting and I declare the SEACAP Practitioners Meeting open.

**THANK YOU !**