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United Nations

Secretary-General

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ACTIVITIES OF SECRETARY-GENERAL IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, 10-11 APRIL

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, from New York in the evening of Friday, 10 April, on an official visit that reinforced cooperation between that country and the United Nations. Upon arrival, he had a working dinner with the United Nations country team, comprised of United Nations agency representatives.

On Saturday morning, he began his official programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic with a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thongloun Sisoulith. The meeting took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After that meeting, the Secretary-General spoke at the official opening of UN House, a compound in central Vientiane, housing United Nations agencies that are part of the United Nations country team. In a speech at the opening ceremony, he noted the steady improvements in health, education, living standards and life spans in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Poverty has declined significantly, he said. Infant and child mortality rates continue to fall and school enrolment and literacy rates are climbing, he added. In addition, Lao People's Democratic Republic is increasingly governed by the rule of law, and its accountability systems are growing stronger. (See Press Release [SG/SM/12181](#))

He congratulated the Government on these achievements, noted the challenges that remain ahead, but said he hoped to see Lao People's Democratic Republic reach every one of the Millennium Development Goals and graduate from the list of least developed countries, thereby assuming a larger role among the community of nations. "At the UN House, we will all join forces to benefit the people of this country, especially those who need it most," he said.

He also took the occasion to launch the second Millennium Development Goals progress report detailing Lao People's Democratic Republic's progress towards achieving the eight Goals.

Saying that it had been almost a quarter of a century since the last visit of a United Nations Secretary-General, the Resident Coordinator thanked the Secretary-General for taking the time to visit Lao People's Democratic Republic, "for showing us that small, peaceful countries do matter". Before he left the UN House, he had a town hall meeting with the United Nations staff.

The Secretary-General then went to the Presidential Palace for a meeting with President Choummaly Sayasone. That was followed by a State luncheon hosted by the President.

He also met with Standing Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad.

Before departing Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Secretary-General visited a centre providing health and other services to young people in the capital. There, he spoke with street children, talked to counsellors who work the hotline services, as well as to the medical staff working at the gender-specific clinic services at the centre.

The Secretary-General left Vientiane in the late afternoon of Saturday, 11 April, for New York via a stopover in Bangkok, where at the airport he met with Prime Minister John Key of New Zealand.

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