



Statement by Sweden in the interactive dialogue on Lao People's Democratic Republic

*Delivered by Counsellor Anna Jakenberg Brinck,
Geneva, January 20, 2015*

Mr President,

There are at least nine reported cases of forced disappearances in Laos. The disappearance of the civil society activist Mr Sombath Somphone is one of the most internationally renowned cases. Mr Sombath was last seen at a police checkpoint on 15 December 2012 and his whereabouts are still unknown. The government issued a statement that the disappearance of Mr Sombath would be thoroughly investigated. No results of the investigations have been publicly disclosed.

Sweden recommends that Laos intensify the investigation into the disappearance of Mr Sombath and accepts external assistance in the investigation and make the results publicly known, and that Laos investigates in a transparent and credible manner all cases of enforced disappearances.

The Media Law and the Law on Publications heavily restrict the domestic media. Last year Laos enacted an Internet law prohibiting online criticism of government policies and the one-party State.

Sweden recommends Laos to revise the Penal Code so that all new laws conform with international human rights standards and that Laos repeal provisions of the law on media and the new decree on Internet that criminalize basic human rights and subordinate individual rights to the interests of the state.

Sweden recommends Laos to thoroughly review existing land concessions and cancel or sanction those found to be violating the law.

Sweden recommends that Laos abolishes the death penalty and evolves into a de jure abolitionist country and that Laos signs and ratifies the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Thank you, Mr. President