

**Statement by Latvia on Lao PDR  
21<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR Working Group  
20 January 2015**

**Mr. President,**

Latvia warmly welcomes the distinguished delegation of Lao People's Democratic Republic to this UPR and thanks it for its comprehensive and well-structured national report. We commend the government for its efforts to ensure implementation of the 2010 UPR recommendations, in particular progress made in ensuring compliance with the rule of law, the steps taken to combat corruption and the country's efforts to eradicate poverty. We are pleased that the Lao government attaches great importance to international cooperation in the field of human rights, both through its active participation in the work of ASEAN and within the framework of the HRC and the Third Committee. We encourage the country to build on its commitment to cooperate with treaty bodies and special procedures, and **recommend** that Lao PDR extend a standing invitation to all mandate holders.

Latvia appreciates the efforts made by the Lao PDR to ensure wide access to media in the country as well as its commitment to facilitate access to the Internet. My country remains concerned however, about various undue restrictions imposed on the freedom of expression, both on and off line, through government control of media ownership and content. We also deplore that defamation, libel and insult are criminal offences under Lao's penal law. **We recommend** that Lao PDR decriminalize defamation and misinformation and remove all undue restrictions on freedom of expression from the Penal Code, the Law on Publications and the newly adopted Internet law in conformity with the country's international human rights obligations.

Mr. President, Latvia considers the ICC an essential institution in the effective implementation of international human rights and humanitarian law. **We therefore recommend** that Lao PDR accede to and fully align its national legislation with the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Finally, my country believes that the country may benefit from the important role national human rights institution play in advising the State on implementation of UPR recommendations and **we recommend** that Lao PDR ensure the creation of a strong, independent National Human Rights Institution, which adheres to the Paris Principles.

**Thank you, Mr. President!**