**Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic**

**21 January 2020**

**Intervention by the delegation of Estonia**

Estonia welcomes the delegation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

Estonia welcomes the strong commitment of the Lao’s government to eliminate violence against children. We commend the Lao PDR for its actions against gender-based violence. Since the last UPR, definite progress has been achieved in the empowerment of women and girls but more attention needs to be given to rural areas, where women need better access to education, health and income-generating activities. We encourage the government to redouble its efforts by ensuring that women have access to good-quality sexual and reproductive health-care services, including access to modern contraceptives and comprehensive sexual education.

Estonia stresses that freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are important and necessary components of democratic societies. We encourage the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to uphold all international human rights standards, including civil and political rights as stipulated by your Constitution and to review all its laws and regulations that restrict the freedom of expression, in particular article 65 of the Penal Code on propaganda against the state, the Media Act of 2008 and Decree No. 327 on Internet-Based Information Control.

Considering this, Estonia recommends the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to:

* Ratify the second Optional Protocol of the ICCPR.
* Accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC and the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities.
* Legalize abortion in cases of risk to the health of the pregnant woman, rape, incest or severe fetal impairment and decriminalize abortion in all other cases.
* Adopt legislative measures to criminalize all forms of sexual abuse, violence, exploitation and sale of children.
* Reform criminal defamation legislation in conformity with ICCPR article 19.
* Guarantee unhindered and private access to domestic and foreign media information for all, both offline and online.

We wish the delegation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic a successful review meeting.

Thank you!