**Universal Periodic Review 35 – (Lao)**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands – (21 January 2020)**

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks the delegation of Lao People's Democratic Republic for the presentation of its national report.

The Netherlands welcomes the commitment of the government of Lao to bring its domestic legislation in line with its obligations under international human rights instruments, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Law on Treaties.

The Netherlands remains concerned about the restricted space for civil society in Lao and tight surveillance of activities by non-governmental organizations and government critics**,** both offline and online. We would also like to recall Lao’s commitment made during the 2010 UPR to ratify and implement the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The Netherlands therefore recommends Lao to:

1. Ensure the right to freedom of expression by repealing article 56 of the Penal Code on acts of betrayal towards the nation and article 65 of the Penal Code on propaganda against the state, in line with the ICCPR and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
2. To ensure independent and impartial investigations into cases of enforced disappearances and hold perpetrators to account.

The Netherlands wishes Lao success with the follow-up of all recommendations it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.