

Lao people's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity and Prosperity

Country report
Of Lao delegation to the Nineteenth Annual
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Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah

Distinguished Excellencies,
Guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor and great pleasure to deliver and speech to the religious liberty conference, on behalf of Lao delegation, as well as the Vientiane Capital Lao front for National Construction and Ministry of Home Affairs, please, allow me to express my sincere and grateful thank to the organizing committee of the Nineteenth Annual International Law and Religion Symposium, who invited us to participate in this important conference being held at **BYU** International center for law and religious studies at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, the united state of America the land of great power, civilization, wealth and beauty.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my best wishes and warmest congratulations to all eminent participants of this significant conference. On this auspicious occasion please allow me to provide a brief overview on the Lao people's Democratic Republic.

This land – lock country is located in the heart of indo-Chinese peninsular, in Southeast Asia and share common borders. with 5 countries, namely: the Lao people's Republic of china to the north, the kingdom of Cambodia to the south, the socialist Republic of Vietnam to the east, the kingdom of Thailand to the west and the union of Myanmar to the north west.

The Lao P.D.R has total territory of 238,000 square kilometers, comprising mountainous, plateau and plain regions. Three-quarter of this land consist of mountainous and plateau, while the remaining one-quarter is blessed with a fertile plain region, which is considered as “the granaries” of the country. Many rivers and tributaries cross the country of Lao P.D.R from the north to the south; the Mekong River stretches from the northern to the southern borders with a length of 1,835 kilometers, and provides great potential for hydropower development. Over half of the cover potential in the lower Mekong Basin is within in Laos.

The Lao P.D.R has a tropical climate and the weather is influenced by monsoons and storm during the year. It has two seasons-wet and dry.

The Lao P.D.R has an abundance of natural resources. Beneath the surface of the earth are mineral deposits including tin, iron, coal, zinc, copper, gold, silver, sulfur and sapphires. On the surface, the country has a wealth of high economic value forest covering

47% of the total land area. The forest regions are also rich in non-timber products and inhabited by a wide range of fauna including many rare, endangered nearly extinct species of the world.

The Lao P.D.R has a total population of 6,2 million people of which 85% are rural dwellers. The population consists of 49 ethnic groups but have been classified in to four main linguistic families: 1) the Lao-Tai family which includes 8 ethnic groups, 2) the Mon - Khmer family which has 32 ethnic groups, 3) the Hmong - Iumien family has 2 ethnic groups and 4). the Tibeto - Burmese family which includes 7 ethnic groups. These multi-ethnic people of Laos are generally scattered across the country, while each has Its own unique traditions, culture and language.

There are 4 majors following religions in Lao PDR: Buddhism, Christianity, Bahai and Islam. The majority of Lao people living in plain are Buddhist followers. With regard to Christianity 3 major sects are present in Lao PDR such as: Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and Evangelist. Lao people not only believe in religions but also believe in Animism and Bramanist rites. The high number and diversity of believers in different religions in Laos proves that Lao government treats all religions equally.

The proclamation of the Lao people's Democratic Republic on the 2nd of December 1975 made the Lao people of all ethnic groups to become the genuine master of the country enjoying independence, sovereignty and territorial. The Lao P.D.R has entered a new glorious era of prosperity and social progress. Entering the new stage of the revolution, the party has laid out two strategic tasks: National defense and development.

Esteemed presidium, since 1975 this country has change from religious state to a secular state, our government respects the freedom and the right of people and allows them to believe or not believe in religious. The government does not allow any activity that forces or buys the ways of citizens to believe in various religious. It respects and protects the activities and principles of religious organizations that abide by the laws of the land. The government promotes and encourages monks and other religious persons to play a role in various activities that will benefit the nation and public. The government prohibits any affairs that intend to discriminate against religious and lay devotees, to ensuring the rights of people of Laos to be able to believe not believe as state in the Lao constitution in 1991 and in 2003. (art 9 and 43). In addition to the provisions in the Constitution relative to Freedom of Religion, a Prime Minister's Decree No. 92 was circulated in 2002 to elaborate the protection of freedom of people to believe or not to believe in any religion.

In our country, religious have played the important role of disseminating the fine national tradition, actively implement policies, law and obligations of the government, strengthening solidarity between social strata, for the course of defense and social development, progressively upgrading the people's equality life, promoting social harmony and peace, processing traditional medicines, taking part in HIV/Aids prevention and control

working on educational information about - Aids , fighting illegal trafficking of drugs, and so on and so forth. Our government is satisfied with many activities of religious organization, which contribute actively in the global movement for complete disarmament of nuclear weapons, in cooperating and strengthening traditional ties with religious or none-religious organizations, working for peace, liberty and security.

The Lao front for National Construction and Ministry of Home Affairs are the important organization in our country in organizing and implementing the policies and tasks. The aforementioned decree is intended to mobilize and garter solidarity and concordance among ethnic, social strata, religious, ages and genders, forming a more perfect union with all the religious organizations in the country. Lao front for National Construction has achieved great historical progress, having profound impact both at home and abroad. In the future Lao front for National Construction will continue to make effort to fulfill their tasks, make future contributions to invigorate the Lao P.D.R and unify the plural ethnic people in one motherland.

In conclusion, I would like to call on all the religious and organized charities to unite together to make our world a domain of peace, liberty, justice, independence, democracy unity and prosperity for all.

May I wish our respected Chairman and participants in this Law and religious symposium good health and may the conference be crowned with great success.

Thank you for attention