

INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION
ON THE ELIMINATION
OF ALL FORMS OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION



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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Seventeenth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States Parties due in 1975

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC^{1/}

[9 January 1978]

Two years after its foundation, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has not yet promulgated any legislative measures. The country's Constitution, too, is still in the process of preparation. Accordingly, guided by its own national and democratic liberation struggle, it bases its practice on revolutionary ideology and the universally recognized principles of human rights.

^{1/} The initial and second periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic were due on 24 March 1975 and 24 March 1977 respectively. In accordance with the request of the Committee at its sixteenth session (A/32/18, paragraph 60 (b)), the present report constitutes the initial and second periodic reports submitted in one document.

In following this course, the Government attaches great importance, inter alia, to the elimination of racial discrimination in all its forms, because it is convinced that races and peoples can live together in peace only if all States throughout the world recognize and apply the fundamental principles of human rights according to which all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and should act towards each other in a spirit of brotherhood. To hold each other in mutual esteem and respect, to complement each other in co-operation and to consolidate national unity in diversity: such is the policy followed by our party and our State. This policy was given practical effect by the magnificent victory of the Lao Revolution, which is striking evidence of the militant solidarity of all ethnic groups of the Lao people, for throughout the period of foreign domination all these groups rose as one against the invaders. The task of national liberation has now been accomplished and this victory is undeniably the result of an heroic contribution by all Lao ethnic groups. In view of this militant solidarity, it is unthinkable that there could today be any ideas or acts which might endanger the rights and dignity of the people of the different ethnic groups.

Thus, despite great ethnic diversity resulting from the existence of 68 ethnic groups totalling one million inhabitants out of a total population of 3,400,000, no form of racial discrimination has occurred. The poly-ethnic Lao people, divided into three large groups of unequal size (Lao Loum, Lao Theung, Lao Soung), has been able, despite this diversity, to maintain its unity around the Party and the Government. This homogeneity is largely attributable to the fact that no ethnic group is abandoned or isolated or completely turned in on itself. Apart from the policy followed, this mutual understanding results from the traditional wisdom of the various groups, which manifests itself in mutual respect, generosity, hospitality and mutual assistance. It constitutes one of the main factors of the socio-political integration of the different ethnic groups in the national society.

Although the various ethnic groups maintain their own names, dialects and cultures, there is no deep feeling of separate identity among these peoples. They all feel that they belong to one and the same nation. The success of this fraternal co-existence results from the application of the policy of fair and equitable national unity of the Party and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which guarantees equal political, economic, social and cultural rights to minority peoples, without any distinction whatsoever.

A Nationalities Committee, with the rank of a Ministry, has even been established within the Government to give effect to this policy and guarantee its success. Its main role is to represent the various ethnic groups, defend the legitimate interests of each of them and work to strengthen national unity. In the near future, regional services of this Committee will be established at all administrative levels so as to enable permanent contact to be maintained with all ethnic groups, to identify and solve their problems and, more particularly, to show them that, even in the more distant regions, they enjoy legal and administrative equality and all social advantages.

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic thus attaches special importance to the unity of the multinational Lao people. History shows us that our enemies have always taken advantage of weakness or discord among ethnic groups in order to interfere in the internal affairs of our State. Thus, measures taken against any attempt at racial discrimination and any incitement to distrust among ethnic groups with the aim of endangering national unity concern matters of State security. They are, therefore, highly political.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic firmly and consistently condemns any practice of racial discrimination. It is shameful to note that ideas of racial superiority and discriminatory practices against certain groups of the population solely on grounds of their origin, race or the colour of their skin should continue to exist in this day and age. Lasting peace can be founded only on peaceful and harmonious co-existence between various racial and ethnic groups based on mutual respect, democracy, equality, tolerance and fraternity.