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13 March 2009

Excellency,

You will recall that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, at its 66th session held from 21 February to 11 March 2005, considered the periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and adopted concluding observations in relation thereto (CERD/C/LAO/CO/15). A follow-up report was received from your Government on 19 May 2006, to which the Committee responded by its letter of 18 August 2006, expressing inter alia continued concern about alleged acts of violence against members of the Hmong minority.

I wish to inform you that the Committee, at its 74th session held from 16 February to 6 March 2009, considered new information received on the situation of the Hmong indigenous people in Koisomboune province under its early warning and urgent action procedure. The Committee is concerned about reports citing the use of military force against these people and action depriving them of access to traditional sources of food and livelihoods.

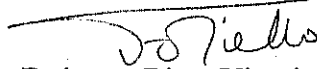
The Committee therefore requests to be informed about the situation of the Hmong indigenous people in this area, in particular with regard to allegations concerning the deployment of military operations against them. In addition, the Committee would appreciate receiving information on the general situation of the Hmong people in the Lao PDR (demographic, economic and socio-cultural data).

Also, given the ongoing repatriation of Lao Hmong refugees from the Huai Nam Khao camp in Thailand, scheduled to end in June this year, the Committee would like to receive information about the status, safety and well-being of returnees in the Lao PDR. The Committee urges the State Party to accept United Nations assistance to help manage the repatriation process.

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In light of the above, and with a view to continuing a constructive dialogue with your Government, the Committee requests the State Party to provide comments no later than 31 July 2009. Allow me, Excellency, to underline that the Committee's requests for information, are made with a view to assisting your Government in the effective implementation of the Convention

Yours sincerely,



Fatimata-Binta Victoire Dah
Chairperson of the Committee for the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination