

# Press Releases: Ninth U.S.-Laos Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue

Media Note  
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The United States and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (P.D.R.) held their ninth annual Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue on March 27 in Washington, reflecting the growing, broad-based relationship between the two nations. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs W. Patrick Murphy and U.S. Ambassador to Laos Rena Bitter led the U.S. delegation, with senior representatives from the U.S. Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce, and Agriculture; the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative; and the United States Agency for International Development. Lao PDR Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongphane Savanphet led the Lao delegation, together with Ambassador to the United States Khamphan Anlavan. The delegations agreed to continue to expand ties in accordance with the 2016 Joint Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership between the United States and Laos, and to explore new areas of cooperation.

U.S. and Lao officials discussed regional issues, including fostering a free and open Indo-Pacific, upholding the rule of law in the South China Sea, and countering transnational organized crime. The U.S. delegation thanked Laos for its role as the U.S. Country Coordinator within ASEAN, and especially its efforts as co-chair of the March 28 ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue. U.S. officials also reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality and U.S. commitment to a strong bilateral relationship based on respect for Lao sovereignty.

U.S. and Lao officials also discussed high-standard economic investment and development, pointing to opportunities for increased trade and business. The delegations discussed human rights, U.S. support for clearing unexploded ordnance (UXO), people-to-people ties, and coordination on ending trafficking of people, illicit drugs, and wildlife. The United States and Laos recognize that rule of law and civil society play important roles in protecting sovereignty, openness, and shared prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

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