

Remarks at a State Luncheon Hosted by President Bounnyang Vorachit of Laos in Vientiane, Laos September 6, 2016

[President Bounnyang made brief remarks. He spoke in Lao, but no transcript was provided because the translation was inaudible.]

President Obama. Mr. President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of myself and my entire delegation, thank you so much for the warm welcome you've extended to us today.

In addition to the work that we are doing together, I very much look forward to experiencing the culture and the cuisine of Laos. I understand there's a saying in Laos that "sweet makes you dizzy, and bitter makes you healthy," and I'm looking forward to being both healthy and maybe a little dizzy as well by the end of this meal.

As the first U.S. President to visit this nation, I know my visit comes at a very important time. I won't make long remarks here; I'll be speaking later this afternoon. But for now, let me simply say how much I hope that our new

partnership will mean greater progress and opportunity for the people of Laos.

I understand that there's a ceremony that's often performed here that's based on the idea that the body has 32 souls and in bad times some souls go missing. Blessings are given when they return and when the body is whole again.

So I propose a toast to the dignity and the future of the people of Laos and to Mr. President and the Government, as well as the people: May this visit and our work together be another step towards making the relationship between our two countries whole again.

Som seuy.

[At this point, President Obama offered a toast.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Dok Boua Ban Room at the Presidential Palace. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Joint Statement—Joint Declaration Between the United States of America and the Lao People's Democratic Republic September 6, 2016

1. On the occasion of his historic state visit to Lao P.D.R., President Barack Obama and President Bounnhang Vorachit held talks today in Vientiane where they officially inaugurated the Comprehensive Partnership between the Lao P.D.R. and the United States of America. Through this partnership, the United States and the Lao P.D.R. are opening a new era of bilateral relations based on mutual respect, common interests and a shared desire to heal the wounds of the past to build a foundation for the future.

2. President Obama and President Bounnhang Vorachit decided to form a U.S.-Lao P.D.R. Comprehensive Partnership for advancing the relationship. They underlined the principles of the U.S.-Lao P.D.R. Compre-

hensive Partnership, including respect for the United Nations Charter, international law, and each other's political systems, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. They stated that the Comprehensive Partnership is intended to contribute to peace, stability, cooperation, and prosperity in each country, in the region, and in the world. The new Comprehensive Partnership will create mechanisms for cooperation in areas including political and diplomatic relations, trade and economic ties, science and technology, education and training, environment and health, humanitarian cooperation, war legacy issues, security, protection and promotion of human rights, and people-to-people ties.