

Issues regarding licensing and renewal of licenses of foreign chambers of commerce and industry operating in the Lao PDR

In 2015, the Government of Laos issued the **Decision on the Establishment of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the Lao PDR (No.: 1006/MoIC.ITD)**. The European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lao PDR welcomed the transparency and fairness that the Decision brought to the licensing and renewal process.

However, recent experience indicates that the interpretation of the Decision in practice has been overly restrictive and not always consistent with the provisions and even the spirit of the Decision itself.

This restrictive approach has constrained and slowed the registration process of foreign chambers of commerce and industry and unreasonably restricted the chambers in governing themselves by their own Articles of Association as set out in article 8.7 of the aforementioned Decision.

In particular, the practice of preventing elected individuals and representatives of Lao companies from contributing their knowledge and experience as management committee members of these chambers is unreasonable and counterproductive.

Such restrictive practices are not in line with the requirements of modern economic development and international standards; they are not conducive to the kind of regulatory environment found in neighbouring countries and thus unnecessarily hold back the economic development of Lao PDR,

We therefore request the Government of Laos to review how the Decision on the Establishment of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the Lao PDR is to be interpreted and implemented. We recommend doing this over the next three months in a consultative dialogue between the ministry concerned, LNCCI and representatives from the foreign chambers in Lao PDR.