

Intervention by Mrs. Phavanh Nuanthasing,
Director General of the International Organizations Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at

the Senior Officials Segment, Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked
Developing Countries 25 April 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

Mr. Moderator,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great honour to attend the 69th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific here in Bangkok, especially to participate in this Senior Officials Segment, Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries on addressing Final Regional Reviews of the Almaty Programme of Action and Biennial of the Istanbul Programme of Action. I also would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the presenters and discussants for the very comprehensive and informative presentation on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. While sharing most views by the previous speakers, my delegation would like to highlight the following points in the case of Laos.

- The Lao Government is strongly committed to effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which has extensively been mainstreamed into its national development strategy, especially in the area of infrastructure development, trade regulations and transit transport system. As a results, Lao PDR has made considerable progress which has contributed to increased socio-economic development as well as enhanced integration of the country into regional and global economic system.
- In the area of infrastructure development, Lao PDR adopted and introduced a new policy with an aim turning the country from a Land - locked to a land - linked country throughout the creation of several programs and policies on infrastructure development as well as bilateral, sub - regional transport agreements with the all neighboring countries in order to make an efficient and reliable transport system for transit transport routes, development of a competitive transport industry with multi- modal transport options as well as the facilitation of cross - border transport of goods and people. These developments have supported the Government's

efforts in achieving the MGDs by 2015 and graduating from the LDC status by 2020.

- It is worth noting that, the importance of bilateral, sub- regional and regional cooperation frameworks in pursuit of objectives of APoA such as: the implementation of various bilateral and multilateral agreements with neighboring countries in particular the GMS – CBTA and various ASEAN Frame Work Agreement. As a result, we have seen a number of cooperation transport infrastructure development projects taken place over the past decade while some projects are in the pipeline.
- In this connection, the Lao government has heavily invested in the improvement of its transport infrastructure and transport service. Each year, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport allocates more than 40% of its budget to upgrade and maintain the road networks mostly concentrating on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the international links as well as the designated routes of ASEAN and GMS.
- In terms of trade and trade facilitation, the trade policy is largely shaped by its bilateral and regional trade agreements, especially ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), its commitments towards the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and its accession to the WTO. To this end, Lao PDR has made tremendous efforts to reform key legislations to be in line with regional arrangements and WTO requirements. Lao PDR has officially become the 158th member of WTO on 2nd February 2013, such WTO accession presents not only opportunities but also challenges for the country to further enhance regional integration and coordination.
- It is important to note that, Lao PDR has set up a Joint Commission with key trading partners and promoting border trade at the local level among its neighboring countries as well as established an inter- agency coordinating body in October 2010, called the National Trade Facilitation Strategy and Action Plan in July 2011. This strategy and action plan identifies an agenda for improving trade facilitation and cooperation.
- However, Lao PDR has faced a lot of disadvantages in terms of its geographical remoteness from international markets, and high transport and trade transaction costs and border crossing procedures, inadequate and poor transport infrastructure, small size of economy, low productive capacity, insufficient human resources both quantity and quality, limited export diversification and lack of export competitiveness. In addition, Lao PDR has to endure even greater competition in the region where development gap exists and where its neighbors are much larger

economies. Such challenges needed Lao PDR to make every effort to create enabling conditions and explore various potentials for sustainable growth in a long run.

Mr. Moderator,
Distinguished Delegates,

- In order to help LLDC, we should further build upon progress made in the APoA implementation by promoting a genuine partnership between the public and private sectors and between landlocked and transit developing countries and development partners in order to establish efficient and reliable transit transport systems and develop cross - border facilities.
- We should promote sub - regional and regional cooperation frameworks as well as further strengthen efforts to simplify and harmonize regulations and procedures of transit between LLDC and transit countries. In this regards, we should further improve and maximize the utilization of existing road networks and economic corridors while ensuring that in promoting connectivity through East - West Economic Corridor and North - South Economic Corridor.

Mr. Moderator,
Distinguished Delegates,

- Being entrusted to chair this vulnerable Group of LLDCs, This year, it is a great honor for the Lao PDR to host the Final Regional Review of the Almaty Programme of Action held from 5 to 7 March 2013 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The main objective of the Regional Review is to identify constraints that LLDCs face and map out our common position and actions. At the conclusion of the review, the meeting adopted the Vientiane Consensus as the regional input to the global final review of the APoA to be held in 2014 and at 69th session of ESCAP, Lao PDR has decided to submit a draft resolution on Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2003-2013 in the Asia-Pacific region and I would like to take this opportunity to invite member state of ESCAP to co-sponsored and support this resolution

Thank you !