

Statement by

**H.E Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of
the Lao PDR, at the Ministerial Segment of the 69th Session of the
United Nations Economic and Social Commission**

of Asia and the Pacific

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Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, on your election as Chairperson of the UNESCAP 69th Session. May I also express my sincere thanks to the Government and people of Thailand for the gracious hospitality extended to us as well as for hosting this year's Session under the theme: **“Building Resilience to Natural Disasters and Major Economic Crises”**

Mr. Chairperson,

During the last 2 years, the global economic and financial crisis that hit all parts of the world have continued to cause major concerns for all nations including countries in Asia and the Pacific region. In addition, the continued fluctuation of food and fuel prices combined with natural disasters and pandemic diseases continue to threaten the lives of people in our region. Such crisis has challenged the capacity and credibility of the existing global governance designed by the international community to address daunting global challenges. This is a

clear indication that our joint efforts and actions have not yet yielded tangible outcomes.

Moreover, major disasters occurred in recent years have shown that natural calamities can have widespread impacts, causing not only harm and damage to lives, buildings and infrastructure, but also impairing economic activity. Actually, in the context of a tightly integrated global economy, disasters can have strong spill-over effects, disrupting global supply chains and featuring cascading and global effects.

Just recently, UNESCAP has launched from 37 cities across Asia and the Pacific Region including in Vientiane, Lao PDR, the Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific 2013. The information contained in 2013 Survey depicts the overall landscape of economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific region. The Survey indicates that economic growth in the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific slowed to 5.6% in 2012 as a result of the double-dip recession in the euro zone and the tepid recovery of the U.S. economy. Although growth is projected to inch up to 6% in 2013, this rate is still below the average of 7.8% previously achieved in 2010-2011 and the average of 8.6% observed during the pre-crisis period of 2002-2007. More importantly, the extent to which the region's economic growth is contributing to the achievement of key development goals remains unclear.

Against these global challenges, as enshrined in the Istanbul and Almaty Programs of Action, the special needs of the world's most vulnerable groups of countries namely the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS must be given a special priority as the challenges and constraints faced by them would hardly be overcome without increased support and cooperation from the international community. Although, there has been global effort to address the needs and constraints of these vulnerable countries through the implementation of various international measures,

the progress of implementation of the said international programs of actions has been slow.

Mr. Chairperson,

At national level, the ultimate goal of the Lao government is to fundamentally reduce poverty and lay a solid ground for graduating from Least Developed Country status by 2020. The national economy continued to experience a robust growth of 8.3% last year in 2012, the same rate recorded in 2011. In early 2013, the country became the 158th member of the World Trade Organization. This also represents a key milestone in gaining better market access and increasing regional and global integration. Likewise, it is also a good incentive for anchoring domestic reforms. In this connection, the Lao PDR is expected to maintain high growth rate of 8.1% in 2013, foreign direct investment is expected to increase in the light of its accession to WTO. Some of the key targets outlined in the 7th Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (for 2011-2015) include: maintaining an annual GDP growth of 8% or above; per capita income of \$1,700 in 2015; achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; graduating from Least Developed Country status by 2020; ensuring sustainable development; regional and global integration; and acquiring modern technologies and infrastructure. To this end, the 7th five-year Plan aims at accelerating growth, ensuring a harmonized economic, social and cultural development and further promoting regional and sub-regional connectivity through accelerating the process of integration into the regional and global economic system namely ASEAN Economic Community and WTO. The country also aims to transform itself from a landlocked to land-linked nation by enhancing integration and connectivity within the GMS and other regional mainstreams. Therefore, the Lao government has invested on the infrastructure especially roads and railway that link the country with the Asian Highway Network and through the implementation of various bilateral agreements with

neighboring countries to facilitate trade and investment with countries in the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

Lao PDR is also vulnerable to recurrent natural disasters such as floods and droughts. Given our country's high vulnerability to natural disasters, the Government of the Lao PDR always pays a great attention to the issue of disaster risk reduction and the implementation of Hyogo Framework for Action on disaster risk reduction. In this connection, the National Disaster Management Committee has been established as its national disaster management platform and the multi-sectoral preparedness and response coordination body for Lao PDR. In support of the disaster risk reduction/disaster risk management efforts, the Inter agency Standing Committee, composed of Government; UN agencies, Red Cross organizations; INGOs; and donors, was established to support the national disaster management platform and coordinate emergency action. The early warning system has been improved through the development of national strategy and standard operating procedure (SOP) on Early Warning; upgrading and setting up data collection and monitoring system, improvement of flood and weather monitoring and forecasting, earthquake monitoring, dissemination of flood early warning information.

Mr. Chairperson,

Being entrusted to chair the Group of LLDCs, it has been 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. The Regional Review Meeting adopted the Vientiane Consensus

as the regional input to the global final review of the APoA to be held in 2014. In this connection, the Lao PDR has tabled a draft Resolution entitled “Final Review of the Implementation of the Program of Action in the Asia-Pacific Region” with the objective to (1) requests the countries of the region and international and regional organizations to endorse the Vientiane Consensus as regional input to the Final Global Review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014; (2) to assist Asia-Pacific LLDCs to implement the Vientiane Consensus; and (3) submit to the Commission at its Seventieth Session a report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the said Resolution. As Chair of LLDCs Groups, Lao PDR would like to thank all co-sponsors and supporters of this draft resolution.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, as the year 2015 is fast approaching and by looking beyond 2015, it is at a critical juncture that countries in our region need to enhance closer cooperation despite difficulties and challenges facing us all. On this note, I wish our deliberation a great success.

Thank you.