



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith,

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

at the Ministerial Segment of the 70th Session of the UNESCAP

Bangkok, 7 August 2014

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before making my statement, let me on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR convey through the Chinese delegation our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the victims' families, the people and the Government of China for the loss of their loved one and the destruction of their property and infrastructure caused by the recent strong earthquake in Southern China.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as chairperson of the 70th Session of the UNESCAP, which is held under the theme "Regional connectivity for shared prosperity". My delegation would also like to commend the ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent arrangements made for our session, including the organization of a series of ministerial panels and high-level events as well as for the preparation of various important reports.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our world today has undergone complex situation. Natural environment continues to be threatened and damaged leading to climate imbalance and more frequent occurrence of natural disasters, which have become unprecedented phenomenon. Political and social unrests and armed conflicts have occurred in different parts of the world that have yet been any sign of immediate resolution. Likewise, the global and regional economic and financial crisis has intensified its gravity and has posed long-term impact. All of this has presented major constraints for the developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones like LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in our region in order to address their special needs and fully integrate into the regional and global economies.

At the national level, being both least developed and landlocked country, the Lao Government is strongly committed to effective implementation of both Istanbul and Almaty Programmes of Action by mainstreaming their objectives and priorities into our 7th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2011-2015). Particular attention is given to accelerating the attainment of MDGs by 2015 and achieving our ultimate goal of LDC graduation by 2020. It is recognized that there is a strong link between the implementation of these Programmes of Action and the achievement of MDGs and our LDC graduation. To this end, the

Government has mobilized all efforts and domestic potentials for enhancing quality growth and inclusive development and undertaken policy dialogues with development partners and the UN system, including through the Round Table Process in order to undertake regular review on the existing cooperation policies and adopt appropriate measures and strategies.

So far, we have made various achievements in socio-economic development. Macro economy has been stable and the economic growth has been at an average rate of 8.2% annually during the last three years. National poverty ratio has continued to reduce and is currently recorded at 20,5%. Health coverage has been expanded and a significant decline in infant and under-five mortality rates have been recorded. In the area of Trade and private sector development, efforts have been made to improve access to finance by providing credit lines for SMEs. In this connection, WTO membership and entering the ASEAN Free Trade Area have created more enabling environment for better functioning of private sector and for attracting FDI. There has been strong performance in mobilising financial resources for development and capacity-building

Mr. Chairperson,

To achieve regional connectivity, first and foremost, we need to ensure national and sub-regional connectivity. In this context, the Lao government has identified transport network a key element of the national plans in order to develop linkages between national roads and enhance connectivity with the neighbouring countries within the Greater Mekong Sub-region and other regional mainstreams. In this connection, the government has invested on infrastructure development, especially roads and railways that link the country with the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, and implemented various bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries to facilitate trade and investment in the region.

In addition, I would like to underline the paramount importance of the four Lao-Thai Friendship Bridges over the Mekong River and one Lao-Myanmar Friendship Bridge which is under construction. These bridges mark the significance of cooperation and friendship while providing easy access, facilitating trade exchange, enhancing people-to-people contacts and bringing great benefits to our countries. They also link the countries within sub-region especially Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and China.

Despite some progress made in our efforts to improve the physical and institutional connectivity, transport and cross-border facilitation remains a big challenge in the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

At regional level, the Lao PDR has attached great importance to and played an active part in the process of ASEAN community building, which will commence on 31 December 2015. Political and economic strength of ASEAN community will form a solid ground for regional cooperation and integration, thus contributing to the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and development in the region and the world at large. To this end, we believe that connectivity among the member states could be realized through effective implementation of the Master Plan on

ASEAN Connectivity, which covers physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. In this Master Plan, there are fifteen priority projects, which can potentially transform the ASEAN region and provide the conditions for a single market and production base. It is recognised that funding for these projects remains scarce and there is a need for the private sector to be actively involved as a number of infrastructure projects identified in the Master Plan are lacking substantial investment.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to emphasize the significance of regional connectivity for development and shared prosperity in our region, and in this regard the need for the international community to help the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in Asia-Pacific region to improve their productive capacity and ensure better connectivity through improved hard and soft infrastructure in order to deepen integration across countries and sub-regions. To this end, it is essential to have an effective institutional coordination mechanism not only across borders and sectors but also among sub-regional, regional and international organizations, including the UN system, to involve financial institutions and the private sector and to renew commitments by the development partners.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by inviting all stakeholders to participate in and contribute actively to the preparation process and organization of the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries to be held in Vienna from 3 to 5 November 2014, and stressing the need to adopt a new, more comprehensive, common action-oriented development framework for the next decade, focusing on accelerated reduction of the high transport and transaction costs, the establishment of efficient transit transport systems through increased investments into transport, energy and information and communications technology infrastructure and border crossing projects.

I thank you.