



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Statement

by

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of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

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Developing Countries

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. My delegation would also like to express our sincere appreciation to our host, the Government of Austria for the cordial hospitality extended to us and kind support for the organization of this historic conference being held here in this beautiful city, Vienna.

Mr. President,

Two decades ago, a state of landlockedness had never been recognized as a unique challenge faced by a landlocked developing country. Only in 1996, the United Nations admitted that the landlocked developing countries are handicapped by their own geographical location. This handicap is now known to be characterized by remoteness to the world market, cumbersome in transit transport procedures and poor and insufficient infrastructure. This hindrance would further exacerbate if it is compounded by the other negative phenomenon. Therefore, it requires international support and cooperation, particularly from development partners and transit neighbours. To this end, the international community has galvanized its resolve to support LLDCs through the adoption of the Almaty Program of Action in 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan that marked the turning point in the international effort to address the challenges faced by LLDCs.

Mr. President,

Throughout a decade of implementation of the Almaty Program of Action, it is noted that considerable progress in addressing the special problems and needs of LLDCs has been recorded, especially in the areas of legal framework, trade facilitation and cross-border procedures. However, much needs to be done as many objectives have not been fully realized, making these countries continue to be marginalized and not in a position to fully integrate themselves into regional and global economic and trading system. Moreover, it is important to point out that the progress of the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action has severely been affected by the high structural vulnerability of the LLDCs in the context of recent global developments. The modest economic growth achieved by the LLDCs during the last decade has recently come under increasing threats due to successive global food, fuel, and financial crises. As a result, most LLDCs are falling short in achieving various social targets including the MDGs while many are severely affected by the

adverse impact of climate change, desertification and land degradation. Now, the question is how to reverse this trend and what lessons should be learnt from a decade of APoA implementation.

Mr. President,

In the Lao PDR, our experience has shown that bilateral and regional cooperation has played a crucial role in addressing the impact of landlockedness. Connectivity with sub-region and region is the key. In this context, the Lao government has implemented a national policy on transforming a land-locked into land-linked country and identified transport network a key element of national development 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 increased investment on infrastructure development, especially roads and railways that link the country with the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks through the implementation of various bilateral and multilateral agreements, the GMS Road network, in particular, North-South Economic Corridor, East-West Economic Corridor and other transport development initiative such as Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) transport linkages scheme in order to facilitate trade, investment and tourism in the region.

On this note, a good example is the completion of Lao-Thai Friendship Bridges across the Mekong River and the on-going construction of Lao-Myanmar Friendship Bridge. These bridges and linked roads reflect the significance of cooperation and friendship between countries in the region, while providing easy access, facilitating investment and trade exchanges as well as enhancing people-to-people contact, thus bringing about great benefits to the countries concerned. In addition, they also help to enhance linkages among countries within sub-region especially Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and China.

At a broader regional level, the Lao PDR has played an active part in the process of ASEAN Economic Community building, which will commence on 31 December 2015. 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. Connectivity among ASEAN 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.

Mr. President,

As highlighted above, regional connectivity is a fundamental factor for development and shared prosperity in our region. But this has to be supported by all development partners. Therefore, it is important that the international community must help LLDCs to improve their productive capacity and ensure better connectivity through improved hard and soft infrastructure in order to enhance 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 importantly to renew commitments by the development partners. I do hope that our development partners would continue to support our endeavours.

Mr. President,

Indeed, this Second UN Conference on LLDCs provides a significant opportunity for the international community to renew its strong commitment towards the cause of LLDCs by adopting a new program of action for the next decade and this commitment should be accompanied by tangible actions and deeds. It is our fervent hope that the new program should be more comprehensive, common action-oriented, focusing on, among others, 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.

Mr. President,

On this note, let me conclude by calling upon all stakeholders, including transit countries, development partners, the UN system, other relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations and private sector to support the implementation of the new program of action by redoubling efforts with stronger political will to fulfil their respective obligations and commitments. Equally important is the need to ensure sufficient support and cooperation and to build enhanced and genuine partnership between landlocked developing countries, transit developing countries, development partners and other stakeholders as well as between public and private sectors at all levels. Lastly it is also crucial to emphasize that the concerns and special needs of LLDCs deserve special attention in all international agendas, including in the formulation of the Post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. Let's work together to pursue the cause of LLDCs.

I thank you.