



**Statement**

**by**

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Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations

On behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

On Agenda Item 21: Group of Countries in Special Situations

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Assembly

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*( Please check against delivery )*

**Thank you Mr. Chair,**

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, and my own country, the Lao PDR.

ASEAN aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of the State of Palestine on behalf of G-77 and China.

**Mr. Chair,**

The world is facing myriad challenges that impact countries in varying degrees, especially the group of countries in special situations. Over the past years achievements have been made in the implementation of the priority areas of IPoA and VPoA. However, LDCs and LLDCs continue to face more challenges than others in the process of their national development due to poverty, low productive capacity, commodity export dependence, low level of economic transformation, limited market access, transport bottleneck, high vulnerability to external shocks and adverse impact of climate change, and most importantly limited financial resources, among others.

This hinders their efforts to meet the agreed global development agendas. For this reason, the development of LDCs and LLDCs must be given a top priority as their needs and challenges would hardly be overcome by themselves. Therefore, the support and assistance from the international community are essential for them to attain the objectives of their national development and effectively implement the agreed global development agenda.

ASEAN, on its part, by recognizing the existence of development gaps within its region as well as the potential benefits of deepening regional integration, has established the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 to foster regional economic integration to facilitate the free flows of trade, investment, and skilled labor mobility. ASEAN has also been implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan III, to promote regional connectivity and narrow the development gap between ASEAN member states. Moreover, with its vision 2025, ASEAN aspires to create a deeper integrated and highly competitive ASEAN economy that would support sustained high economic growth and resilience even in the face of global economic shocks and volatilities. To realize these objectives, ASEAN continues to promote economic partnership with its dialogues partners to integrate the region into the global economy.

**Mr. Chair,**

By recognizing the vulnerability to external shocks of LDCs and LLDCs, which remains a growing concern due to intensifying impact of climate change and the limited financial resources to build resilient transport infrastructure, ASEAN has exerted common effort to address the issue of climate change and disaster risk management. In this connection, we highly appreciate the United Nations' support to ASEAN through the implementation of the ASEAN-UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2016-2020. However, having all these cooperation frameworks in place is not enough to help LDCs and LLDCs adapt to and mitigate climate risks, which could reverse their hard-earned developmental gains in a short period of time.

ASEAN, therefore, calls on development partners to continue to support the mitigation and adaptation needs of LDCs and LLDCs, which is fundamental to addressing the destructive impacts of climate change on their overall development aspects and livelihood of its people.

**Mr. Chair,**

This year is important for the group of countries in special situation as the mid-term review of the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action (VPOA) is going to take place at the end of this year and the Fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs is scheduled to be held in 2021 to take stock of the implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action. Therefore, accelerated actions are critical to address the remaining challenges in many fronts, which members of the group are facing. In this regard, ASEAN supports these conferences and welcomes countries that offer to host them which clearly show their commitment to help this group of countries to effectively implement IPoA, and VPoA as well as SDG, among others.

**Mr. Chair,**

Let me conclude by reaffirming ASEAN's commitment to cooperating with the international community to promote sustainable development and narrow the development gap in our region.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.