



**Statement
By**

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Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

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(Please check against delivery)

**Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Lao PDR, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you Mr. Chair and, in alignment with the previous speakers, commend Malawi, as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau, for the able stewardship of our Group and tireless efforts and achievements made throughout the past year. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your noble task.
2. It is for another year that our group's annual ministerial meeting is taking place at an unprecedented time of a challenging COVID-19 pandemic. This global health crisis has brought about impacts for many countries worldwide, especially for vulnerable and countries in special situations such as LDCs. Considerable reductions in economic growth, widespread unemployment, and trade disruption, among other, remain challenges that LDCs have continuously encountered. Also, with uncertainty lying ahead, we cannot be assured of how long until this pandemic will end given its newly developed variants periodically.

Mr. Chair,

3. For the past years, LDCs witness that the impacts of COVID-19 have put at risk the progress made in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) priority areas and LDC's special needs, including economic and structural challenges, health-care systems, limited coverage of social protection, and financial constraint. It also jeopardizes the progress in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other development agendas. LDCs may have learnt during this situation that the approach of building back better, stronger, and more resilient is considered pivotal for the future of LDCs.
4. Lao PDR, as one of the most vulnerable countries in the name of both LDC and LLDC, has inevitably faced massive impacts in multiple dimensions. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted our economic activities and social wellbeing in term of increasing pressure on our healthcare system. This is not to mention reduced investment and income

through declining tourism sector and remittances, which also lead to higher unemployment rate due to the inbound of exported labors. These hindrances have threatened to revert our decade-long achieved progress as we are embarking toward the conclusion of the implementation of IPoA.

5. Throughout the years, the IPoA implementation has resulted in considerable progress in Lao PDR's socio-economic development, as reflected in the outcomes of the two consecutive triennial reviews by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP). However, like many other LDCs, challenges still remain in term of limited progress in productive capacity and structural transformation that continue to keep our country shortfall of resilience for economic shocks. In this regard, productive capacity and diversification is of paramount importance for LDCs as well as Lao PDR.

Mr. Chair,

6. Looking forward to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs in 2022, Lao PDR would welcome a new programme of action, and reiterates that the current IPoA's fundamental principles to help address LDCs' specific challenges and special needs should be carried over to Doha Programme of Action. Particularly, in light of rising spending needs and economic recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in growing public debt, Doha Programme of Action should attach more importance to ensuring that the international support measures provide assistance for LDCs in term of financing for the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, addressing the development barriers, and overcoming existing vulnerabilities.
7. On this note, Lao PDR remains committed to the realization of a new programme of action and will further integrate it into our 9th National Social-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPlan). We will also continue to work closely with the UN Country Team, other UN agencies, development partners, and all relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of a national smooth transition strategy. Therefore, we would like to urge the international community to enhance necessary assistance and support for Lao PDR toward an ambition to achieve a quality and sustainable LDC graduation in the near future.

Mr. Chair,

8. I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of further advancing our common aspiration and reaffirming Lao PDR's determination to eradicate poverty and pursue the path of sustainable development. On this note, I also extend my sincere thanks to the development partners, UN system, INGOs and other international organizations for their continued support and assistance extended to us, in order to overcome this challenging time and build back better.

I thank you.