

Statement by
H.E. Choummaly SAYASONE,
President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the Special High-Level Event on a New Rural Development
Paradigm and the Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities
Model Inspired by the Saemaul Undong
New York, 26 September 2015

Madame Moderator,
Excellencies,

It is my great honor to participate in this Special High-Level Event. Taking this opportunity I would like to commend the Republic of Korea, UNDP and OECD for co-hosting this event on the very important topic which is relevant to the current development, especially in aligning the post-2015 development agenda adopted at the UN Summit yesterday into the development priorities while meeting capacity needs of each country.

Over the past years, the Lao Government has attached great importance to rural development and poverty reduction as one of the key priorities identified in the Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plans. To achieve the goal of reducing poverty, our Government established a National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication in 2007 mandated to coordinate and follow up on the implementation of policy on rural development and poverty eradication across the country, in which we focus on key areas such as permanent settlement and creation of permanent jobs for the people in rural areas, conducting vocational and labour skills training for the poor, establishing a financing mechanism at the local level to provide access to financial resources, promoting commercial production, developing socio-economic infrastructure and adopting incentive policy to attract domestic and foreign investors to the rural areas.

In addition, since 2012 we have been implementing a “three-level development” initiative known as “*Sam-Sang*” that is making a province as the strategic body, a district as a comprehensively strong body, and a village as development body. To this end, the Government has mobilized resources for developing infrastructure

and promoting commercial production by, among others, providing credits for commodity production in 51 pilot districts and 109 pilot villages with a total number of 943 pilot projects. Through the implementation of these pilot projects, important achievements have been recorded such as capacity of district and village authorities has been strengthened with an increasing sense of ownership, local community has become more enthusiastic and pro-active in contributing to poverty reduction projects, which directly rendered them tangible benefits. Therefore, we consider that the "three-level development" initiative has considerably contributed towards a more sustainable and inclusive rural development, thus steadily improving the livelihood of people.

Madame Moderator,

We highly value Saemaul Undong initiative and commend the Republic of Korea for its remarkable achievements made since 1970s. This has become a good model for the rural development and poverty eradication being applied in many developing countries, including in the Lao PDR. We are of the view that Saemaul Undong projects are proved to be effective, sustainable and relevant for the rural development and poverty eradication in the Lao PDR. It corresponds to our "three-level development" initiative. Since 2008, some Saemaul Undong pilot projects had been implemented in the Lao PDR through UNESCAP. As a result, local community in some districts in Vientiane Capital and Vientiane province has taken more ownership in collaborating with Village Development Committee. It was also observed that cooperation and coordination among various sectors at the local level has been improved. In late 2013, I had a great privilege to pay a state visit to the Republic of Korea. During the meeting with President Park Geun-hye, I also endorsed the Integrated Rural Development Project with Saemaul Undong's Participatory Approach to be implemented in Vientiane Capital, Vientiane and Savannakhet provinces, Lao PDR, for the period from 2015-2019 with support by KOICA.

Madame Moderator,

The Lao PDR is pleased to have been selected as one of the pilot countries to implement the UNDP global initiative for Saemaul Initiative Towards Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities

(ISNC), starting from July 2015 to the end of 2016. The main objectives of the ISNC project are to help rural villages in improving nutrition status and providing greater access to food security; to assist local communities in strengthening their capacity in development planning; and to promote exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government and people of the Lao PDR, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, UNDP and international organizations for the continued support and cooperation extended to us in our national development cause, especially rural development and poverty eradication in the Lao PDR throughout the past years. We do hope that such support and assistance will continue in the future.

Thank you.