

Statement by

Ambassador Anouparb Vongnorkeo, Permanent Representative of the Lao PDR
at the General Debate of the 56th Session of the Commission Population Development

On the Agenda Item 3 (b): Population, Education and Sustainable Development

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you and members of the bureau on your election to this 56th Session of CPD and assure you of our full support and cooperation. My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by delegations of Cuba and Nepal on behalf of G77 and China and LDCs respectively.

Mr. Chair,

Since the adoption of ICPD Programme of Action in 1994, especially after the ICPD 25 voluntary commitment made at the Nairobi Summit, Lao PDR has made significant progress in the implementation of the Program at country level. In this context, the National Population and Development Policy for 2019-2030 was developed with support from UNFPA. This policy aims at improving the overall well-being of people with particular attention given to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality and women empowerment. In addition, a number of national action plans have been implemented which have resulted in notable demographic transition, providing window of opportunity which will significantly contribute to socio-economic development, especially when adequate resources and improved human capital are guaranteed. The domestic policy implementation is key to achieving the ambitious targets for LDC graduation and the SDGs.

Towards this end, tangible outcome has been recorded in accelerating the efforts to reduce maternal mortality, increase access to right-based family planning and end gender-based violence and harmful practices, empowering the young population to realize demographic dividend. The Lao PDR is among countries with largest reduction in maternal mortality rate (MMR). Between 2000-2020, the number of pregnant women who died per 100,000 live births dropped more than 70% (or from 440 in 2000, to 185 in 2020) as a result of strengthened midwifery training and healthcare system.

Mr Chair,

Our government has made education one of the top priorities to improve Human Asset Index by increasing domestic budget allocation, putting particular emphasis on strengthening quality of education and creating enabling conditions to provide education for all and enhance women and girls' greater access to education. As part of the innovative framework called "Noi", the effort to address child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is now fully integrated in school curricula and being rolled out nationwide. This on-going effort is complimented by relevant interventions for out of school groups. In promoting the life-long learning for all people, the Government has implemented necessary measures to ensure that all Lao citizens, equal access to all forms of education. Currently, investment in ICT and innovations has increased remarkably in education sector.

Despite the said commitment and progress, the impact of Covid19 coupled with current economic challenges have severely affected financing for development efforts as well as on investing in human resource capacity. With over 84,000 new job seekers entering the labour market annually, to achieve the related SDGs, the Government will need to mobilize all available sources of financing for education and health, in particular in areas such as family

planning and reproductive health, which according to recent studies, will provide the highest return on investment and yield multiple benefits, allowing every pregnancy to be planned, reduction in teenage pregnancies and stunting, potential increase in school retention as well as stronger workforce participation of women. All this, will help to ensure that young population are empowered and contribute more to our national development efforts and post pandemic recovery.

Mr Chair,

In conclusion, the Lao PDR reaffirms its unwavering commitment to continue implementing the ICPD Plan of Action and to attain the SDG targets related to population and development and at this critical juncture, increased support by the international community remains crucial. I thank you.