



## **Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Thongphane Savanphet,**

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

at the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

**New York, 17 September 2020**

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

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, and your bureau for the able chairmanship in promoting the group's interests, unity and solidarity during this challenging time. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your noble task.

We are currently in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. This unprecedented global health crisis has significantly impacted the most vulnerable countries such as LDCs in many aspects, in particular the areas of public health and economy. This pandemic has generated volatile commodity price shocks, supply chain disruption, loss of export earning, reduced investment and remittances, together with a deteriorating tourism sector, and higher unemployment rate, among others. As we are reaching the final stage of the IPoA implementation, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened to revert our decade-long progress and exacerbated the existing vulnerability and multiple challenges faced prior to COVID-19.

In this connection, my delegation calls on the international community to take necessary and immediate actions, mid-term recovery, and long-term strategic measures as outlined in the statement of LDCs to respond to COVID-19, (issued as an official document of the UN, under the symbol A/74/843) and would like to emphasize that the LDCs should have equitable and affordable access to the COVID-19 vaccine without discrimination.

**Mr. Chair,**

At national level, the Lao PDR is also encountering numerous impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, economic and social sectors have been hardly hit, including a sharp decline in tourism, investment and trade activities, resulting in revenue losses, among others. Moreover, the pandemic has brought about immediate and long-term impacts on people's livelihood, especially on employment opportunities, poverty eradication, education, health and social protection. This crisis has undoubtedly led to overall declining of economic growth and slowdown progress towards SDGs implementation.

In this regard, social-economic impact assessment of COVID-19, along with sufficient technical and financial support from development partners, UN system, and International Financial Institutions, are more crucial than ever to assist national governments in developing short, medium and long-term policies, and to ensure that people, households and businesses that are most affected by the crisis receive the necessary support needed while adopting a holistic approach to building back better in the new normal. Most importantly, such support will help safeguarding our hard-earned progress on poverty eradication, SDGs implementation, as well as on the future prospect of graduation from LDC status. In this connection, my delegation is of the view that ODA is crucial for the development of LDCs. I, therefore, call upon the development partners to mainstream LDC related activities into their work plans.

The Lao government is strongly committed to the realization of IPoA and SDGs. To this end, the government has been working closely with the UN Country Team, other UN agencies, development partners, and all relevant stakeholders to implement our National Social-Economic Development Plans, National Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2025 and the Vision 2030 in order to prepare for the triannual review of the Committee for Development Policy to be undertaken at the beginning of next year. Recently, the Lao PDR have just successfully held the 1<sup>st</sup> Virtual Briefing on LDC graduation with relevant UN system entities on 8 September 2020, having concluded with the expectation that the Lao PDR will sufficiently meet two out of the three or all three criteria, marking its two consecutive successful reviews, which will make the country eligible to be recommended for graduation by the CDP and enable its transition journey. However, under this unprecedented situation, the government of the Lao PDR is weighing the successes achieved over the years against the impacts from COVID-19 pandemic to see whether the country is still on track to graduate from LDC status on the set schedule.

**Mr. Chair,**

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of further advancing our common aspiration and increasing the LDCs' voice during the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, and reaffirming the 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.