



**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)

before the Second Committee, 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

Agenda Item 23: Group of Countries in Special Situations

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*( Please check against delivery )*

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 Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. Chair,**

The group of countries in special situations has been the hardest hit by the current global health crisis. With the already narrow and weak economic structure, fragile health systems with limited coverage of social protection systems coupled with limited financial and other resources, the LDCs are most likely to suffer from the severe consequences of the projected global economic slowdown in the form of commodity price shocks, loss of exports, investment and remittances, along with rising unemployment and rapid plummet in tourism. Similarly, as a result of stringent lockdown measures applied globally, combined with projected decline in global output, LLDCs are facing even greater challenges given their lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness from international markets and heavy reliance on transit countries.

Despite progress made on many areas of the IPoA and VPoA implementations, the pandemic has threatened to revert our decade-long progress and exacerbated the existing vulnerability and multiple challenges faced prior to the ongoing challenges, including poverty and hunger, which are on the rise while debts are skyrocketing.

In this connection, scaled-up international support and assistance are more needed than ever for LDCs and LLDCs to take necessary and immediate actions, along with mid-term recovery, and long-term strategic measures to mitigate the devastating socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 in order to safeguard their hard-earned progress made over the years and to accelerate the implementation of programmes of actions for this group of countries in special situations in this decade of action so that they are not left further behind.

**Mr. Chair,**

ASEAN, on its part, has recognized the social and economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2020 was held on April 14, this year, reflecting our strong political will for a responsive and cohesive regional approach to fight against the pandemic. In addition, ASEAN has adopted the Hanoi Plan of Action and been working on the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework with an aim to improving stability and resilience of the regional economy, preserving supply chain connectivity and moving towards a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient future while minimizing the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic. ASEAN also established the COVID-19 Response Fund and welcomed all the pledges from dialogue partners and the international community to support the Fund as well as to the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies which is at the final stage of development.

ASEAN continues to underline the importance of narrowing the development gaps within its region, and remains committed to implement 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. Importantly, 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.

**Mr. Chair,**

As LDCs are reaching the final stage of IPoA implementation, and preparing for the Fifth United Nations Conference of the LDCs, it is crucial to recognize the remaining challenges which require enhanced cooperation and supports from the international community, especially in the areas of productive capacity building, strengthening structural economic transformation, and increasing global share of exports. Most importantly, the high vulnerability to external shocks and climate-

related phenomena have caused devastating loss and damage to lives, livelihoods and infrastructure in both LDCs and LLDCs.

In this regard, ASEAN has exerted its common effort to address the issue of climate change and disaster risk management, while recognizing the critical role of the UNDS to mobilize necessary supports for national governments to sustainably recover and build back better in the aftermath of COVID- 19. This unprecedented public health crisis poses a major test for the repositioned RC system and the new UN Country team in the field, especially in LDCs and LLDCs.

**Mr. Chair,**

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of enhanced international support measures to national governments of LDCS and LLDCs so as to address their special needs and challenges to sustainably recover and build back better and we reaffirm ASEAN's commitment to work closely with the international community to overcome this challenging time together and to further promote sustainable development through multilateral cooperation. I thank you, Mr. Chairman