



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Thongloun SISOULITH,
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Head of the Delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the High-level Plenary Meeting
of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review
of the Almaty Programme of Action
*New York, 2 October 2008***

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Lao delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of chairmanship of this important event. We trust that your wisdom and skills will guide our deliberations to a meaningful outcome. You can rest assured of our Delegation's full support and cooperation in the discharge of your entrusted mandate.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to H.E. Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan and his able team for the efficient manner in which he facilitated the negotiations on the outcome document of this meeting.

We wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive and analytical report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. We feel gratified that the implementation of APoA has yielded a considerable progress. The special problems and needs of LLDCs have been widely recognized and addressed in various fields particularly in transport infrastructure development, trade facilitation, aid and debt relief. Furthermore, greater attention and resources have been given by regional and global multilateral and development institutions to the establishment of efficient transit systems. Various activities have also been undertaken by both landlocked and transit developing countries to fulfill their respective obligations reflected as the priorities of APoA.

Yet, more remains to be done for the APoA to be made a reality. In this regard, further actions are required to accelerate the process of establishing viable and predictable transit systems through the promotion of regional and sub-regional cooperative arrangements, closer cooperation between LLDCs and their neighbours, transit policy reforms and trade facilitation measures. Of utmost importance is the need for greater market access for goods originating from LLDCs. In this context, it is imperative for the international community to ensure effective participation of LLDCs in the WTO negotiations, especially those related to trade facilitation, by urgently providing them increased and well-coordinated financial and technical assistance, including through the Aid-for-Trade initiative.

Mr. President,

Despite some progress achieved in socio-economic development, the economic growth and social well-being of LLDCs remain very vulnerable to external shocks and the multiple challenges facing the international community, namely financial instability, global economic slow-down, food and fuel price hikes and the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. The LLDCs continue to be marginalized from the international trading system due to their high transaction costs that prevent them from maximizing the use of trade as an instrument for achieving their development goals. In this regard, we believe that the current deliberations will be able to come up with innovative ways and means for further tackling the problem. The draft Declaration we are going to adopt at the end of this meeting would reenergize all stakeholders to do more towards the fulfillment of their respective commitments as called for in the APoA. Needless to say, unless their geographical disadvantages are properly addressed the marginalization of LLDCs in the global economy will continue to deepen.

Mr. President,

Since its adoption, APoA has been translated into development strategies of the Lao Government. In follow-up to the implementation of the said Program of Action, the National Transport Committee under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport was established as monitoring and reporting mechanism. Despite having landlocked status, the Lao PDR is exerting all its efforts to overcome numerous constraints confronting it. Strategically located in the heart of the emerging Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), the Lao PDR has upheld its firm commitment to actively participate in the GMS and ASEAN economic cooperation frameworks. To reap benefits from regional and sub-regional cooperation

programs, while promoting trade, investment and tourism, the Government is pursuing a policy of gradual transformation from a landlocked to a land-linked nation with priorities given to development of road transport network, regional and international linkages including railway link, road maintenance and rehabilitation.

At the 3rd Summit of the Leaders of the Greater Mekong Sub-region held in Vientiane, Lao PDR in March 2008, the leaders of 6 GMS countries adopted a Joint Summit Declaration and Vientiane Plan of Action for Greater Mekong Sub-region development from 2008-2012 under the theme “Enhancing Competitiveness through Greater Connectivity”. Our leaders reaffirmed their commitment towards fostering closer sub-regional linkages. They also pledge to accelerate the construction and improvement of the remaining sections of GMS corridors, and expand the corridor network through multimodal linkages, including the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link.

Mr. President,

To conclude, the Lao PDR reaffirms its unwavering commitment to continue cooperating with other fellow LLDCs and her transit neighbours in the follow-up to the implementation of APoA. We sincerely thank all donors for the generous aid they have provided over the past years in our strenuous efforts to live up to our international obligations, including APoA. Yet, with its limited capacity as a landlocked least developed country, the Lao PDR hopes to receive increased support and assistance from the donor community, including the United Nations system.

I thank you, Mr. President.