

Statement by

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Department of Planning, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Lao PDR

at the Commission on Population and Development

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Mme.Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to participate in the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development in which the discussion this year is crucial to ensure that population issues are integrating into sustainable development, in particular in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Lao PDR expresses our fully support as population and development issues are interlinked with sustainable development. It is, therefore, significant to integrate population dynamics into development planning in order to maximize the benefits and mitigates challenges from population changes, ensuring our achievement of sustainable development. This has been a heart of the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Years National Socio-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR (2016-2020).

For Lao PDR, the first demographic dividend has started and will last for another 30 years. Young people below 25 years of age account for more than half of the population. However, there are number of challenges that we are facing including quality education, high drop-out rate, youth unemployment and early marriage and early pregnancy. Investments in the well-being of adolescents and youth as well as their unhindered access to information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and services, and their full right to participate in decision-making are most critical to ensure that they have the capabilities and opportunities to define their productive and creative lives, and stimulate the innovations needed for a sustainable future.

The Lao Government has set in motion several strategic actions, including the five-year Health Sector Reform Plan; a pro-poor policy to provide free maternity care services; the health insurance pilot scheme covering Maternal health; the Education For All National Plan, and a national action plan on Violence against women. Similarly, as a country facing rapid socio-economic changes with increasing migration and a youthful demography, we see the importance of planning and building sustainable cities and strengthening urban-rural linkages.

However, we note that more needs to be done to ensure the well-being of all our people and achieve sustainable development including increasing investment on young people and strengthening their participation in decision-making and planning; promoting programmes to keep girls in school and to respond to violence against women and girls; continuing the unfinished business of MDGs agenda including the MDG 5B, addressing unmet needs for family planning especially for young people; and increasing efforts to ensure equitable development and economic growth.

To address these issues, we would like to call for an increased collaboration and assistance for investments in young people to realize the demographic dividend; capacity building for developing countries and for women's and girls' empowerment; and capacity building to collect, analyze and use disaggregated data for planning and monitoring in order to address inequality.

Mme. Chair,

Let me conclude by reiterating our support for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD taking into account the findings and recommendations of the ICPD beyond 2014 review, and by calling for population issues to be further addressed and comprehensively elaborated in the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your kind attention