



**Draft
Statement**

by

H.E. Mr. Saleumxay KOMMASITH,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Land Locked Developing Countries
(LLDCs)

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Check against delivery

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. I wish to begin by expressing my sincere thanks and appreciation to Paraguay for the able chairmanship of our group over the past two years. At the same time, I wish to congratulate Kazakhstan as incoming chair of our group for the next two years. Please be assured that you can count on our full support in the discharge of your important task. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the continued support extended to our group by the UN-OHRLLS.
2. Over the past years as shown in the report, mixed progress has been made in the six priority areas of the VPOA. Therefore, accelerated actions are needed to address the remaining challenges in many fronts. This includes, inter alia, poverty and inadequate connectivity and technology as a result of limited financial resources for the resilient infrastructure development. Moreover, LLDCs continue to encounter greater difficulties in expanding international trade due to high cost of trade which is doubled that of the transit developing countries.
3. The Lao Government remains strongly committed to improving infrastructure, trade regulations and trade facilities with transit neighbors with an aim to transform the country from being landlocked into a land-linked country. This reflects the common endeavor and commitment of all LLDCs to become an inland transit route or a logistic hub for regional trade and communication link. In this connection, the Lao Government has localized the priority areas of VPOA and integrated them into the national development plan and policies, along with increasing investment for infrastructure development, in particular, building road and railway networks to connect the country with Asian Highway and Tran-Asian Railway networks, for instance the ongoing Lao-China Railway Project, through which the Lao government plans to link its capital with the southern Chinese border and with countries in mainland Southeast Asia.

Mr. Chairman,

4. This year is important for our group as we have reached the mid-way in the implementation of the six priority areas of the Vienna Program of Action (VPOA). The preparatory process for the High-Level Comprehensive Mid-Term Review of the VPOA is ongoing. It is gratified to note that the regional consultations in all regions have been conducted successfully. The reviews have taken stock of progress, identified challenges and gaps in the implementation of the VPOA, and most importantly the way forward which will be more practical, workable and an action-oriented solution to accelerate the implementation of the VOPA in the second half so that the objectives of our group will be realized. We look forward to the High-Level Comprehensive Mid-Term Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Program of Action, which will be convened in December this year. I commend the Chair and our two co-facilitators for their able leadership in leading the preparatory process in the run up to the High-Level Comprehensive Mid-Term Review.

Mr. Chairman,

5. At this critical juncture, to review the implementation of the VPOA, it is crucial for the LLDCs, their transit neighbours, development partners, international and regional financial institutions and the UN bodies to strongly recommit ourselves to accelerating the implementation of the VOPA so that the special development needs and challenges arising from landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints can be addressed in a more concrete and coherent manner. This will help LLDCs to alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development and better connect to the world at large.

Mr. Chairman,

6. In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the Lao PDR's strong commitment to realizing the objectives of the VPOA and stands ready to work closely with the international community to implement the VPOA in the remaining five year-period.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.