

## **Statement by**

**H.E. Viengsavath SIPHANDONE**

**Public Works and Transport Vice Minister**

**at The Ministerial Meeting of Land Locked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport**

**For the Session of Ministerial Level Exchange of Views on National Experiences on improving transport connectivity and trade facilitation for the achievement of the SDGs**

**15-16 May 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan**

- Honorable Ministers and Vice Ministers,
- Distinguished Under-Secretary-General,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Lao PDR Delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Kazakhstan, the host and UN-OHRLS for the warm hospitality extended to our delegation and excellent arrangements in organizing this highly meaningful and important Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport in this vibrant and charming city of Astana.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Lao PDR has put efforts and incorporated all Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its national development strategy, especially in the area of infrastructure development, trade regulations and transit transport system. Throughout its implementation, we have made considerable progress which has contributed to increased social-economic development and well-being of the people as well as enhanced integration of the country into regional and global economic system.

In terms of infrastructure development, the Lao government adopted and introduced a policy with an aim turning the country from a "land-locked" to a "land-linked" country. This idea rests on the belief that the country can become a inland transit route for countries in the region to use as a trade and communications hub among them.

In order to realise this transformation, the Lao Government has heavily invested in the improvement of its transport infrastructure and transport service and developed several programs and policies on infrastructure development, especially the development of an efficient and reliable transport system for transit transport routes, development of a competitive transport industry with multi-modal transport options as well as the facilitation of cross-border transport of goods and people.

**In terms of trade and trade facilitation**, our trade policy is largely shaped by its bilateral and regional trade agreements, especially ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and its accession to the WTO.

Despite positive developments, the Lao PDR has faced a lot of disadvantages in terms of its geographical remoteness from international markets, and high transport and trade transaction costs, and cumbersome customs and border crossing procedures, inadequate and poor transport and logistics facilities namely dry ports, distribution centers, we also faced small size of economy, low productive capacity, low technology, insufficient human resources both quantity and quality, limited export diversification and lack of export competitiveness.

As a less developed member of ASEAN, the Lao PDR has to endure even greater competition in the region where development gap exists and where its neighbors are much larger economies like China, Viet Nam and Thailand. We therefore need to make every effort to create enabling conditions and explore various potentials for sustainable growth and poverty eradication.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In terms of ways forwards, I would like to propose the following:

Firstly, we should further build and promote a genuine partnership between the public and private sectors and between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, sub-regional, regional, and global levels in order to establish efficient and reliable transit transport systems and develop cross-border facilities.

Secondly, we should further strengthen efforts to simplify and harmonize laws, rules, regulations, procedures and transport related documents of a LLDC and transit countries.

Thirdly, we should further improve and maximize the utilization of existing road networks and economic corridors while ensuring that in promoting connectivity through East-West Economic Corridor and North-South Economic Corridor, mutually beneficial arrangements of these economic corridors are properly implemented .

Fourthly, we should further promote sub-regional and regional cooperation frameworks which have significantly contributed to enhanced regional integration and connectivity as currently taking place in Southeast Asian region.

Finally, it is of critical importance that we receive sufficient financial, technological and capacity-building assistance from the development partners, the UN system, international organizations and private sector while a" LLDCs and transit neighboring countries should commit themselves with stronger political will in order to achieve the SDGs.

I thank you