Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Viengsavath SIPHANDONE
Vice Minister of Public Works and Transport

At the High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Decade 2014 - 2024

New York, 5 - 6 December 2019

(Please check against delivery)
Mr. President,

1. At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for your leadership in this midterm review.

2. The Lao Government has attached great importance to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA). We have incorporated and implemented its priority areas through the national development plan and strategy, especially in the area of infrastructure, trade facilitation and transit transport system. So far, we have made considerable progress as reflected in our midterm report, thus contributing to increased social-economic development, people’s well-being as well as enhanced integration of the country’s economy into the regional and global system and regional connectivity.

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

4. To this end, the Lao Government has heavily invested in the improvement and development of its transport infrastructure and service, particularly the efficient and reliable transport system for transit routes and cross border transport. For instance, the development of economic corridors, construction of bridges connecting with Thailand and Myanmar and the introduction of six main railway projects under the Railway Strategic Plan for the year 2016 - 2030, including the Laos - China railway cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative.

5. In terms of international trade and trade facilitation, our policy is largely shaped by bilateral, regional and international trade agreements, including via the framework of ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO). Domestically, the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) was established in 2018, with a mandate to monitor,
supervise and facilitate trade and business operation in the country. Most recently, the Lao Government deposited its instrument of ratification of Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Port last month.

Mr. President,

6. Despite the progress made, the Lao PDR continues to encounter a lot of challenges in its VPOA implementation in terms of financial constraints, inadequate logistics facilities such as dry ports and distribution centers, cumbersome customs, low productive capacity and technology, insufficient human resources, as well as limited export diversification and its competitiveness.

7. In conclusion, let me reaffirm our accelerated effort towards achieving the overarching goals of the VPOA by continuing the investment on the areas in needs and working closely with the international community to effectively implement the VPOA for the remaining five years.

I thank you