Statement by H.E. Mr. Saleumxay KOMMASITH
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at the Plenary of 74th Commission Session of UNESCAP

Bangkok, 14 May 2018

Madam Chairperson,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao Government, I wish to express my sincere congratulations to you, on your election as Chairperson of the 74th Session of the Commission. I am confident that under your able chairmanship, this session will be crowned with a great success. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to the UNESCAP and the Government and People of Thailand for the hospitality and excellent arrangement made for this year’s Commission Session.

Allow me to join the previous speakers in expressing our deep condolences to the people and the Government of Indonesia over the recent terrorist attacks in the city of Surabaya which claimed lives and wounded innocent people.

Madam Chairperson,

The recent report released by UNESCAP demonstrates that Asia-Pacific has emerged as the world’s fastest growing region over the past decades and registered a remarkable success in reducing poverty, lifting close to a billion people out of extreme poverty. On the other hand, this dynamism has been accompanied by rising inequality, among others, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to persist and even
getting wider in many countries and parts of the world. Such trend has posed significant challenges to the international community in realizing the SDGs within the set timeline. Moreover, inequality could cause potential impact on social order, peace and stability, which are the prerequisites for development. In order to minimize the possible negative impact and to realize the ambitious development agenda by 2030, developing countries, in particular countries with special needs such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs, continue to require meaningful partnership and increased support and assistance from development partners. In this context, it is very timely that our Session deliberates under the theme “Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

Madam Chairperson,

The Lao Government has adopted several policies and measures to address inequality and to narrow development gap in the country as reflected in our current Eight Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2016-2020, the Tenth Years Development Strategy 2016-2025 and Vision 2030 ultimately aimed at graduating from the LDC status and becoming a high-middle income country by 2030. In addition, the rural development has been at the heart of the Government’s development strategy. As a result, Considerable progress has been made. Overall poverty rate has been decreased and now stands at 18.8 per cent. Indicators across social sector have been improving. The living standard of the Lao people has been gradually elevated.

The recent review by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) in March this year on the LDC status of the Lao PDR has indicated that the Lao PDR has met two out of three eligibility criteria namely the thresholds for Gross National Income (GNI) and Human Assets Index (HAI) to graduate from LDC status for the first time, reviewed. In order to maintain this positive momentum for the second round of the review in 2021, the Lao Government will need to undertake further national policy reforms and adopt cohesive measures to reassure the effectiveness in mobilizing resources to support the implementation of its national development plans and prepare for a smooth transition for LDC graduation.

Madam Chairperson,

The Lao Government attaches great importance and is highly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Commission that the Lao PDR has been selected among the 47 countries to
present its Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to be held in New York in July this year.

Madam Chairperson,

As no nation can succeed alone, without enhanced regional and international cooperation, narrowing inequalities within and among countries will remain an uphill task. In this regard, we believe that the role of regional and international organizations in addressing common challenges posed by income inequalities and shared vulnerabilities is utmost important. In the wake of an emerged negative trend of anti-globalization and protectionism, it is crucial to reaffirm the principle of multilateralism, under which dispute would be resolved through peaceful means and peaceful negotiation in an equal footing. Only through this we would be able to ensure equality. In this context, the ongoing reforms of the United Nations, other international organizations and financial institutions should be carried in an inclusive, open, transparent, predictable and democratic manner with a view to addressing regional and global inequalities and challenges, with particular attention given to meeting the needs of countries in special situations namely LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS for them to cope with vulnerability and external shocks. Against this backdrop, I believe UNESCAP will continue play an important role in prioritizing and overseeing the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and promote the regional policy coordination and coherence.

In this regard, the Lao PDR welcomes all efforts undertaken by regional and sub-regional mechanisms particularly ASEAN, MRC, GMS, the Belt and Road Initiative, among others which in the long-run will contribute to the long-term investment in the sustainable infrastructure development, strengthening regional trade, economic cooperation and connectivity. In addition, the establishment of the International Think Tank for LLDCs is a tangible result of multilateral cooperation and joint efforts in addressing the special needs of LLDCs.

The Lao PDR also recognizes the vital role played by science, technology and innovation as a fundamental means to support the acceleration of the SDGs implementation. However, it is important to focus on how we can make the best use of science and technology and addressing the inequality in accessing to technology in the era of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, greater efforts are needed to ensure that the sound and advance technology is shared and transferred to developing countries. The Lao PDR is also of the view that enhancing capacity building in science, technology
and innovation is essential for advancing development progress in developing countries as well as in accelerating the realization of international sustainable development agenda.

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation would like to reiterate that reduction of all forms and dimensions of inequality and ensuring that no one is left behind are vital to the successful implementation of 2030 Agenda. Therefore, it is important that supportive policies and effective institutional mechanisms are in place in order to enable member states, especially countries with special needs to attain their development objectives.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all friendly countries, development partners and international organizations for your continued support and assistance extended to the Lao PDR in our national development efforts. Since Madam Executive Secretary Shamshad Akhtar will end her noble tenure of office after the closure of this Commission Session, I wish to thank her for the excellent leadership she has demonstrated at UNESCAP and commend her for the great achievement she has made throughout the past years and I also wish the 74th Session of Commission a great success.

Thank you.