STATEMENT BY

H.E Mr Thongphane SAVANPHET
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Head of Delegation of the Lao PDR

Agenda item 2 (a) High-Level thematic Roundtable 2:
“Ensuring Resilient Supply Chains and Connectivity”

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, on behalf of the Lao Delegation, I would like to congratulate the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the UNESCAP.

Mr. Chairman,

2. The on-going COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented and has affected countries worldwide, including in the Asia Pacific. The pandemic has affected all aspects of our societies, including public health, people’s livelihood and economies, and has indeed exposed our shared vulnerabilities and interconnectedness, especially in terms of supply chain and connectivity. The pandemic has caused the disruption of system of international trade, the flow of goods & services, including transport, logistics, investment and tourism. This pandemic has clearly overwhelmed the achievement we have made so far, and has further increased country’s existing vulnerability, particularly those in low income and least developed countries.

3. Taking into account these circumstances, we need to enhance regional and international cooperation and partnership in order to overcome these challenges, such as to reshape infrastructure in order to pursue easier cross-border trade and connectivity in the region through the implementation of National Plans /strategies and regional and global cooperation frameworks. For example, in ASEAN, these include implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), Agreement of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, among others.

4. For the Lao PDR, being both LDC and LLDC, we very much depend on the participation in global and regional value chains and trade for sustainable economic growth and development. The Government has attached great importance to connectivity as one of national development priority, in order to improve infrastructure to facilitate trade, investment, tourism and people to
people exchange within the country and with transit neighbours and the region. Therefore, the Lao government has implemented a strategy to transform the Lao PDR from a landlocked into a land-linked country in order to gradually change the current geographical location hindrance into an opportunity for the country’s development and become an inland transit route and a logistic hub in the sub-region through developing and upgrading roads, bridges and railways and connecting the country to the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks. This includes our plans to link the Lao-China Railway and Highways projects with these networks in the future. On this occasion, I would to express our sincere appreciation to UNESCAP and all partners for the support and assistance extended to the Lao PDR in our development efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Let me conclude by reaffirming that the Lao PDR stands ready to work with all ESCAP member states and associate members to uphold multilateral cooperation and partnership, and enhance connectivity and resilient supply chain for rapid and better recovery, and a sustainable future of Asia-Pacific.

I thank you.