Statement by
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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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Mr. Chair,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

First and foremost, on behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair on your election as Chairperson to steer the 77th Session of the Commission. It is my firm belief that with your extensive experience, you will be able to lead the deliberation of this session to a successful conclusion. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Thailand and the Secretariat for making this session possible amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic throughout the region.

Mr. Chair,

Given the ongoing and prolonged Covid-19 pandemic around the world and in our region, the theme chosen for our deliberation of “building back better from crises through regional cooperation” is most relevant as countries around the world are experiencing myriad challenges. This unprecedented global health crisis brought huge impacts and threats on people’s life as well as on socio-economic development and security of countries around the world, both in the immediate and long terms. Many countries in Asia and the Pacific have serious encountered not only to contain the pandemic itself but also mitigate the untold consequences on socio-economic development and achieve the global agenda for sustainable development.

In this context, while developed country are more capable to respond and able to adapt to its impact and recovery, developing countries and in particular the least developed countries are hardest hit and impaired, including my country. Therefore, international community must take bold actions to scale up multilateral cooperation under the framework of global partnership to strengthen its collective efforts in addressing and mitigating negative impacts of Covid-19 with a sense of urgency. The most immediate work needs to be done is to contain the spread of the virus. While many countries in the region is in the early stages of Covid-19 vaccine inoculation campaign, we need to ensure equitable access to the vaccine for all.
Therefore, Lao PDR strongly urges the international community to promote “vaccine multilateralism” or COVAX, to ensure that COVID-19 vaccine is a global common and affordable public goods for all countries. In particular, most vulnerable and marginalized countries like LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS must be upfront to receive assistance and support from international community so that they will not be left behind in the global efforts to meet the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and be more resilient to any unexpected pandemics in the future.

In this context, we concur with the summary highlighted by the Secretariat on the four areas of social protection; invest more in a sustained economic recovery; strengthening connectivity and supply chains; and protecting environmental health. In addition, member states should further strengthen border management, immigration, cross-borders trade facilitation, transport links as well as to accelerate the provision of essential services to the people with better social protection and guaranteed equal access to quality healthcare.

Mr. Chair,

For Lao PDR, we have tried our best to prevent and contain the pandemic and have been achieved quite good results since the beginning of the outbreak, but not until the middle of this month that we experience the large community transmission and the Government has to put, once again, painful lockdowns on Vientiane Capital together with some other cities in provinces.

The Government also steps up efforts on vaccine inoculation, starting with the frontline officers and the most vulnerable and at-risk groups and now expanding to cover all general public nationwide. The aim is to reach 22 percent of our population within this year and 70 percent by the end of 2022. This, however, will largely depend on the availability of the vaccine and support given by international community.

Mr. Chair,

On other note, according to the triennial review of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) convened early this year, the Lao PDR has met all criteria for LDC graduation and has been recommended for graduation
with 5 Years preparatory period effectively setting the graduation date by 2026. This will be a challenging time for my country as we are trying to contain the pandemic, revive our economy and maintain economic growth so that we can maintain all criteria for LDC graduation.

This year, Lao PDR also decides to present its 2\textsuperscript{nd} Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum 2021. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} VNR will be a trend analysis report of the development progresses and challenges that remain to be tackled, including the way forward to achieving the SDGs in the Lao PDR.

May I also take this opportunity to inform that the Government of Lao PDR decided to present its candidature for the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) membership for the term 2023-2025. This is the first time ever that the Lao PDR which belongs to both vulnerable groups of LDCs and LLDCs to seek a membership in this important body of the United Nations. The Lao Government would highly appreciate the valuable support from member countries from Asia and the Pacific region.

Mr. Chair,

Let me conclude by reaffirming that Lao PDR stands ready to work with all UNESCAP member states and associate members to uphold the multilateral cooperation and to work closely with all stakeholders in order to address this global pandemic of Covid-19 and achieving the lofty goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. Let me also express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to international organizations and development partners that have provided invaluable assistance and support to my country and hopes to receive your continued support. May I wish our meeting a great success.

I thank you!