

The Lao People's Democratic Republic

Remarks by
H.E. Mr. Maythong Thammavongsa
At the 81st Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Agenda Item 2: "Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"

21 April 2025

- ***Mr. Chair,***
- ***Madam Executive Secretary,***
- ***Excellencies,***
- ***Distinguished Guests,***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

1. At the outset, on behalf of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to those affected by the recent earthquake in this region. I also take this opportunity to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, and commend the ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent organization of the 81st Session of the Commission of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. This year's theme, *"**Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development in Asia and the Pacific**"*, is timely and most relevant as our region continues to face complex and interconnected challenges. Rapid urbanization, the growing impact of climate change, economic volatility, and deepening inequalities require us to redouble our efforts through coordinated and cross-sectoral responses to address those multifaceted challenges.

3. The Lao PDR, like many countries in special situations, continues to confront structural vulnerabilities. Rising public debt and limited fiscal space increasingly constrain our capacity to invest in critical infrastructure and social services. In response, we are implementing the **9th Five Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021–2025** to restore macroeconomic stability and financial discipline. Nonetheless, national efforts alone are not sufficient. We join others in calling for **reform of the global financial architecture** to ensure equitable, timely, and predictable access to concessional financing—particularly for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

4. As we prepare for our graduation from LDC status, the Lao PDR emphasizes the critical importance of sustained international support and strengthened regional cooperation. We firmly believe that effective regional collaboration can help bridge development gaps and facilitate a smooth, sustainable, and irreversible graduation process.

Mr. Chair,

5. We are making tangible progress in promoting regional integration. Our participation in the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** has opened new opportunities for trade expansion, investment, and innovation. Moreover, the operationalization of the **Lao-China Railway** has significantly enhanced our connectivity, helping to transform Lao PDR from a landlocked to a land-linked country, thereby improving access to regional and global markets.

6. On the digital front, narrowing the digital divide remains a pressing priority. The Lao PDR is advancing digital transformation through our **E-Government Development Plan**, alongside efforts to upgrade ICT infrastructure and promote digital literacy.

7. Addressing poverty and inequality lies at the heart of our national development efforts. Our **National Social Protection Strategy 2025** aims to expand coverage, especially for the most vulnerable, through inclusive health insurance, social welfare, and social security schemes. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed gaps in our safety nets, but it also strengthened our resolve to build more robust and equitable systems, particularly for women, children, and marginalized communities.

8. Climate change is a growing existential threat. We therefore call for **increased investment in renewable energy, equitable access to climate finance**, and support for building adaptive capacity in LDCs. For its part, Lao PDR is implementing the **National Strategy on Climate Change 2021–2030** and the **Green Growth Strategy 2018–2030**. These frameworks aim to strengthen resilience in agriculture, water resource management, and public health, while balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. Furthermore, we will submit our updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0** at COP30 in Brazil later this year—an expression of our unwavering commitment to global climate action.

- ***Mr. Chair,***

9. While the Lao PDR is actively pursuing sustainable solutions to national challenges, we recognize that **regional solidarity and multilateral cooperation** are vital to success. We call on ESCAP and the broader United Nations system to maintain their pivotal role in facilitating regional dialogue, capacity-building, and technical assistance. Specifically, we advocate for:

    - Enhanced support for **debt sustainability and development financing mechanisms** tailored to countries with special needs;
    - Scaled-up regional initiatives to promote **inclusive and secure digital transformation**;
    - Strengthened platforms for cooperation on **climate adaptation and resilient urban infrastructure development**.

10. In closing, the Lao PDR reaffirms its strong commitment to **advancing regional cooperation** and implementing the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. We look forward to working closely with ESCAP and all Member States to realize a more **inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future** for the Asia-Pacific region—one that leaves no one behind and supports a smooth transition for countries on the path to sustainable graduation from LDC status.

Thank you.