



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Phankham VIPHAVANH

Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

At the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

25 September 2021

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, on your election as President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). I am confident that with your extensive diplomatic experience, you will be able to lead the deliberation to a great success. Taking this opportunity, I would also like to commend H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir for his successful presidency of the 75th Session of the UNGA.

Mr. President,

It has been almost 2 years now that we have learned about and lived with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 4.5 million lives around the world and posed unprecedented pressure on our healthcare system, disrupted the global economic chain, made more people poor, hindered physical interaction between people, and created disorder and mutual mistrust. Although this kind of situation had occurred before in human history, but what we are encountering now is considered the most severe crisis and remains unpredictable for how long we will eventually overcome it. Nonetheless, the last 2 years have given us many lessons learnt. The key lesson we have drawn from is to uphold a genuine cooperation among all in local and international community. Disunity, prejudice, and mutual antagonism will not only make us succumb to COVID-19, but it could further bring about catastrophe for humanity. Lessons from the pandemic have taught us that where there is unity, mutual cooperation and support, there the success on containing COVID-19 prevails.

Mr. President,

I am delighted to observe that during the span of COVID-19 pandemic, the international community has attached great attention and has been determined to combat and contain COVID-19 pandemic. This issue has become an international agenda at all fora, be it at bilateral or multilateral levels, where

preventive measures and solutions are discussed and agreed upon. This has given us encouragement and impetus to triumph over the COVID-19 pandemic in the near future. The global commitment toward enhanced cooperation has clearly been translated into practical actions, such as information and lessons learnt sharing and execution of various preventive measures, including provision of medical supports, vaccines and medicines, as well as adoption of mitigation measures to address the social and economic impacts from the outbreak of COVID-19.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government as well as the people of the Lao PDR, to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the international community, the friendly countries, including international organizations for rendering assistance to the Lao PDR in various areas, which enabled our country to contain the outbreak at a manageable level. This is a reflection of effective concrete assistance and genuine cooperation of the international community and I hope that the Lao PDR will continue to receive further support in the future.

Mr. President,

Although the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in many countries has gained a positive momentum. However, if we do not continue our enhanced cooperation and mutual assistance, be it at the political or technical levels, we would hardly overcome this crisis. Against this backdrop, I would like to urge the international community, particularly the countries with advanced medical science and all scientists worldwide to make concerted efforts in combatting COVID-19, especially in research and development of vaccines, medicines, including cooperation on COVID-19 origin tracing. We should avoid blame game and politicization of COVID-19 issue that may lead to political discourse. We are enthusiastic to see all medical scientists around the world, coming to work closely together in finding ways to protect people's lives without discrimination.

On another note, throughout the past 2 years, COVID-19 has destroyed global economic chain, forcing every country in the world into economic

recession and stagnation. It has created direct impacts on socio-economic development of every country, especially developing and least developed countries, including the Lao PDR. The progress made prior to COVID-19 in the implementation of international commitments, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and others, have been undermined. Moreover, the ability and capacity of these countries to recover from this impact has been minimal. In this regard, I would like to call on the international community, particularly the developed countries, to give importance to and pay attention on enhancing assistance to the developing and least developed countries in order to enable them to overcome the impacts from COVID-19.

Mr. President,

As mentioned above, Lao PDR, like many other countries, has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The national economic growth, as well as progress made in the implementation of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), have significantly been undermined despite the efforts made by the Lao Government, such as adopting the short and long-term measures, which include the integration of SDGs into the 5-year NSEDP, as well as the Development Strategy 2025 and the vision 2030. Furthermore, there has been an effort to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, with an ambition to lift the country out of the least developed country (LDC) status in the near future. Although Lao PDR successfully met all the 3 criteria for graduation from LDC status in the 2nd review in February 2021, we still have concerns over the impacts of COVID-19 that may impair Lao PDR's competence to remain on track in all the 3 established criteria.

Under these difficult and challenging circumstances, nevertheless, Lao Government has continued its effort to implement its 9th 5-year NSEDP (2021 - 2025) that was recently adopted by the National Assembly while the issue of addressing the economic and financial constraints and the fight against drug was made a national agenda, calling for all walks of life nationwide to effectively implement this national priority. Taking this opportunity, I would like to request

the international community to consider their continued support and assistance to the Government and people of the Lao PDR, so as to make our goal as well as our national agenda a reality.

Mr. President,

In the regional cooperation context, Lao PDR has actively participated and contributed with great responsibility under the framework of ASEAN, especially in the maintenance and promotion of peace and stability in the region, to create an environment conducive for the development cooperation of ASEAN member states. In addition, ASEAN has attached the importance on the cooperation for the prevention and response to COVID-19 as well as post-COVID-19 economic recovery, aimed at building ASEAN a community with strong foundation for the future by adhering to the principles as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter in the wake of ever-increasing international integration and interdependence. At the same time, Lao PDR is committed to reducing the development disparity and promoting the intra-ASEAN and inter-regional connectivity, putting all the efforts in utilizing potentials within the region together with the external ones in the implementation of the 4th Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the Masterplan for ASEAN Connectivity 2025, with a purpose to create an opportunity to promote infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and sustainable development in the region. On this note, the Lao PDR continues its economic infrastructure development in order to efficiently facilitate the regional and sub-regional integration through various cooperation frameworks. One of the milestone events in the coming months is the inauguration of the China-Laos high-speed railway to be held by the end of 2021, which will mark the first ever Lao PDR's railway and the opening of a new era under the vision to transform a landlocked into land-linked country so as to further promote the better facilitation of regional trade.

Mr. President,

In the midst of the current global situations which are overwhelmed with complexity, conflicts and different perspectives, Lao PDR still stands solid on its foreign policy for peace, independence, friendship and cooperation, as well as on the principles of conflict resolution through peaceful means and non-interference in others' internal affairs, and always believes that peace and security is the ultimate priority and prerequisites for every nation's socio-economic development. Therefore, negotiations by peaceful means and dialogue with sincerity are pivotal in ensuring peace and cooperation. Isolation, confrontation and unilateral sanctions imposed on one country bring no benefit for any parties involved and the international community at large. In our continued support along with the world community, we urge the lifting of economic embargo on the Republic of Cuba, aimed at enabling the country to contain the outbreak of COVID-19 and sustain self-development, be able to carry out economic, trade and investment cooperation with other countries without any restriction in order to bring about tangible benefits for the people in this country and in the region.

The prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict over many decades has resulted in great loss of lives and properties for the Palestinian and Israeli, of which it should have been solved by peaceful means. The Lao PDR once again calls for the relevant parties to resume dialogues and mutual trust building for solving the issue aimed at accomplishing the establishment of two sovereign states of Palestine and Israel, peacefully coexisting under the relevant UN resolutions.

Mr. President,

Lao PDR has attached the importance of addressing climate change by integrating the commitment under the Paris Agreement into its NSEDP and the National Green Growth Strategy. From 2000 to 2020, the greenhouse gas emission by Lao PDR has been lowered by 34 percent in comparison with the

baseline emission. Furthermore, the Government has presented a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) on Climate Change to the United Nations, in which it targets to reduce 60 percent of the greenhouse gas emission by 2030. This is another remarkable step of the Lao PDR in contribution to tackling climate change issue and upholding its commitment under the Paris Agreement. In this regard, Lao PDR sincerely urges all countries around the world to reinforce their efforts to realize the Paris Agreement commitment in order to prevent and minimize the occurrence of severe natural disasters and devastating impacts on our planet.

Mr. President,

I have a firm confidence that the upholding of multilateralism, conflict resolution through peaceful means and development cooperation under the UN Charter, remain true and relevant mechanism for us to address and battle against the global crisis we are facing, aimed at meeting humanity's common aspiration for a future that all people live in peace and prosperity. The Lao PDR will continue to actively contribute to promoting the cooperation under the United Nations auspices. In this spirit, I would like to reiterate our candidature for membership of the ECOSOC for the term 2023 – 2025. This has clearly demonstrated our utmost determination and readiness to make full and active contribution in the noble tasks of United Nations. We, therefore, look forward to the support for our candidature from all UN member states and hope for the opportunity to actively contribute to the work of the Council.

Thank you.