



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Statement by

**His Excellency Mr. Sonexay SIPHANDONE,
Prime Minister of the Lao PDR
At the General Debate of the 79th Session of the United
Nations General Assembly
(15 minutes)**

New York, 27 September 2024

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- Mr. President,
- Excellencies,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you, Excellency Philemon Yang on your election as the President of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I have full confidence that with your extensive diplomatic experience and wisdom, you shall successfully lead this August Assembly under the theme of “Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations” which is of most importance and relevance to the current global situation. In the same vein, I would like to commend His Excellency Denis Francis for successful conduct of his tenure as the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Today, the international community is facing multifaceted challenges taking place across various regions, such as geo-political tensions, armed conflicts, economic and financial crisis, ever more frequent and devastating natural disasters resulting from climate change, rising poverty and wide spreading of social unrests worldwide, among others. These remain real threats to international peace, stability and security, and obstacles to national development efforts of member states, as well as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving many countries that have yet to fully recover from the impacts of Covid-19 with exacerbated economic and financial difficulties. Against this backdrop, I have witnessed that Member States have strived to enhance cooperation, both through the multilateral frameworks and regional mechanisms, to jointly address the pressing issues, aiming at creating an environment conducive for maintenance of peace which is the most fundamental condition for sustainable development.

However, these challenges that we are facing are much more fragile and could lead to more dire consequences and potentially re-shape the current and future international peace and security landscape, especially the geo-political tensions that are becoming more confrontational, and widening division, all of which require immediate attention including the prolonged conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine and many countries in Africa.

The Lao PDR is deeply concerned with the ongoing armed-conflict that is gravitating towards spilling over the entire Middle East region, which would consequence in even more humanitarian crisis for innocent civilians. Therefore, we maintain our consistent support to all international efforts aimed at achieving a permanent ceasefire and cessation of all violence in Gaza and the adjacent areas, as the fundamental condition for safe and unhindered humanitarian access for the people, as well as rapid peace agreement negotiation. The Lao PDR reiterates its support for the two-state solution for the Palestinian issue, where Palestine and Israel coexist in peace in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, and calls for respect for the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and for creating necessary condition for Palestine to become a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Many countries all over the world, including the Lao PDR, have experienced and suffered firsthand the consequences of war and solving disputes by force, which directly endanger peace and security with unpredictable destruction to innocent lives. As such, the only way to solve disputes at all levels, with a view towards sustainable peace, is to begin with building mutual trust along with diplomatic negotiations based on respect for sovereignty and adherence to the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter.

I am of the view that the international community must ascend to its required responsibility and political commitment that lead to tangible results, based on international principles, to address various issues at hand, as well as emerging challenges in the future. Simultaneously, we must further enhance our development cooperation and global partnership, ensuring the concrete implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, together with the outcomes of the Summit of the Future that world leaders just endorsed most recently, based on the promotion of multilateralism with the UN at its core, to adequately and timely respond to the needs of the international community.

It is my view that the application of unilateral coercive measures is against the principles of the UN Charter and International Law. These measures have severely and disproportionately affected the innocent people and obstructed development progress in many countries. On that account, we reiterate our unwavering support, in line with the calls of the international community, for

ending the economic embargo against Cuba and removing it from the “list of State Sponsors of Terrorism” and removal of all unilateral coercive measures against any Sovereign State.

Mr. President,

The Lao PDR has the honour to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2024 for the third time under the theme “ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience” aiming at building ASEAN to be a more connected and resilient Community through the implementation of 2024 ASEAN priorities and initiatives. The theme is reflective of the Lao PDR’s national policy and objective to turn itself from being a land-locked country to a regional connectivity hub. The theme is also in line with ASEAN's common goal of building a more connected, integrated and resilient region that is able to respond effectively and timely to emerging challenges amidst regional and global complex and rapidly changing landscapes, thereby contributing to the global common cause of maintaining peace, stability and security as well as sustainable development in the region and the world.

Importantly, this year, ASEAN is focusing on developing strategic plans in each pillar as well as the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 towards a Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic, and People-Centred Community as well as the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. In addition, ASEAN is accelerating the accession process to admit Timor-Leste as a full member of ASEAN in the near future.

On the developments in Myanmar, the Lao PDR, as the ASEAN Chair, continues to uphold the ASEAN’s commitment to assisting Myanmar in finding a peaceful and durable solution to the ongoing problem in Myanmar through the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, based on Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led process. The Lao PDR will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders, aiming at building a conducive environment to the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, including the inclusive national dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President,

The Lao PDR remains steadfast to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on socio-economic development together with environment protection and reduction of poverty. Last July, the Lao PDR presented its third

Voluntary National Review of the SDGs implementation at the 2024 High-level Political Forum, which demonstrated that there remains slow progress and off-track goals. Among them, the implementation of the National SDG 18: “Lives safe from Unexploded Ordinance”, has made progress in varying degrees. However, the unexploded ordinance remains a major threat to the lives of the Lao people and pose obstacles to the national development while hindering the progress of other SDGs. We, therefore, take this opportunity to call upon the international community to provide predictable and adequate support and assistance to the Lao PDR in addressing this long overdue and challenging problem, in accordance with the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The Lao PDR is of the view that one of the main obstacles to implementing the SDGs is insufficient funding. As such, there is an urgent need to reform international financial architecture through the collaboration among the UN Development system, Development Partners and the International Financial Institutions while promoting the participation of the developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance. Currently, it is our view that the UN Development system, at all levels, must enhance its role in cooperating with and providing support to the member states, especially the Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in order to help tackle their special needs and challenges.

Another key factor that can help accelerate national development efforts is the role of science, technology and innovation, including artificial intelligence, in facilitating Green Growth and Digitalization that is environmentally friendly and investment in carbon capture and storage. Thus, the Lao PDR calls on the international community to facilitate access and transfer of appropriate technology and innovation to help leapfrog the development, including support for the implementation of strategic plan and vision for the development of digital economy of the Lao PDR.

Furthermore, I am of the view that Human Capital is another decisive factor. Presently, one-third of the Lao population are within the age range of 10 to 24, making the Lao PDR the nation with the youngest population in Southeast Asia and those figures are projected to continuously increase for the next 10 years. At the same time, the working age population is expected to increase around 67% of the total population by 2030, as compared to 63% in 2020. The Government of the

Lao PDR has invested in its Human Capital Development in order to reap the benefits of its demographic dividend. As part of such efforts, the Government of the Lao PDR organized the first Human Capital Summit on Education in 2023 and the second Summit on Nutrition in 2024, aimed at enhancing education quality, basic healthcare and nutrition of the Lao people.

On graduation from the Least Developed Country status, the Lao Government has adopted the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation by 2026 and Beyond. From the result of the triennial review by the UN Committee for Development Policy in early 2024, the Lao PDR continues to meet all 3 thresholds for graduation by 2026. However, given the current situation, we are of the view that there remains the necessity for us to continue to focus our forces and efforts to cope with external shocks and address domestic economic and financial difficulties as well as impacts of natural disasters including the ongoing floodings, in cooperation with the United Nations and development partners in order for the Lao PDR to be able to overcome the various obstacles and continue its development momentum towards a smooth, quality and sustainable graduation from the LDC status.

Mr. President,

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the international community for the success outcome of the Summit of the Future which has reaffirmed strong commitments of the world leaders to supporting multilateralism, maintenance of peace and promotion of international cooperation for sustainable development through the adoption of the “Pact for the Future” which focuses on the current challenges of the world and building a better future for the future generations.

In this connection, the Global Digital Compact (GDC) has set the goals to eliminate all obstacles and facilitate digital cooperation at the international level, while also ensuring that technological advancement contributes to the acceleration of the SDGs achievement. The Lao PDR always take into consideration our common responsibility for future generations, and thus highly values the adoption of the Declaration on Future Generations which prescribes the principles and commitments to protecting our world peace and stability, ensuring equal access to social services, information and innovation while addressing impacts of climate change, among others. All of these will help ensure the sustainability of our planet

in which the future generations could continue the utilization of natural resources in the future.

Despite being one of the least emission polluting countries in the world, the Lao PDR, like many other countries, has encountered severe consequences of climate change and natural disasters. Hence, the Lao PDR has adopted its National Strategic Plan on Climate Change and committed to contributing to the international efforts in addressing climate change. Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate all on the success of the High-level meeting on Sea-level Rise on 25 September 2024, which has reiterated the need for strong international cooperation to address climate change. Notwithstanding the fact that the Lao PDR is landlocked, we stand ready to contribute to the international efforts to protect the environment, while calling for support measures to further increase adaptation capacity and resilience for responding to future impacts.

Mr. President,

Last but not least, I would like to reaffirm the consistent support of the Government of the Lao PDR to the multilateralism and the principles stipulated in the UN Charter and International Law. The Lao PDR continues to uphold its cooperation with the member states of the UN and regional countries to contribute to the cause of maintaining peace and security, promoting prosperity of all nations worldwide as well as overcoming the challenges of today and achieving the sustainable development goals, in order to provide enabling condition for a bright future of the current and new generations.

I thank you.