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General Debate

Statement by the Vice Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Lao People's
Democratic Republic

Wednesday, 20 July 2016

Speaker: H.E. Mr. Somchith Inthamith

*Not checked against delivery**

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Somchith Inthamith, Vice Minister of Industry and Commerce of Lao PDR at the General Debate of UNCTAD XIV
Nairobi, Kenya
20.07.2016 at 11:50am

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let's me begin by conveying my sincere appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this important Conference of UNCTAD XIV and for the generous hospitality accorded to my delegation.

I would also like to join my previous speakers in thanking Secretary General of UNCTAD and the UNCTAD Secretariat for their hard work in preparation for this Conference.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Lao PDR is pleased to participate in this important international event at a time when global environment has undergone complex and unpredictable security and economic challenges, which have caused major impact on people's livelihood across the globe. We are gathering here the theme "From Decisions to Actions" of great relevance so as to ensure that our common aspirations are met and concerns are adequately addressed. During the past decades, different goals have been set with appropriate actions outlined. Therefore, it is more crucial than ever for all nations to work in unison and live up to our commitments by translating them into concrete actions. Our task is to make sure that this happens both at the national and international levels and all walks of life can equally reap benefits from economic development and global trade.

The Lao PDR fully endorses proposed Declaration of UNCTAD XIV and supports the declarations proposed by G77 and China, LDCs, LLDCs respectively. It is our view that the documents contain and builds on various decisions taken by the international community by taking into account particular development needs of groups of countries in special situation namely the LDCs and LLDCs as well as in-line with the internationally adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Adis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, as well as the outcomes of the 10th MC of WTO.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me now turn on national experience. The Lao PDR has set an ultimate goal of graduating from LDC status by 2020. Toward this end, it has mainstreamed the internationally agreed development goals, particular the MDGs into our national social-economic development plans. During the last 5 years, we have witnessed positive developments in our national development efforts by achieving a sustained GDP growth of

no less than 7% on average. Likewise, per capita income has also increased considerably by 80% compared to the year 2000. According to the World Bank's report, the country has now been categorized as a Lower Middle Income Country. The Lao PDR has also made significant progress in addressing poverty over the past decades and poverty rate has declined from 48% in 1990s to 23% in 2015. Nevertheless, the challenge is now to ensure growth with equity and all people can benefit from economic development. Economic integration has been high on its national development agenda, which has led to active participation in bilateral, regional and global economic cooperation. In 2013 the Lao PDR acceded to WTO and throughout this year 2016, our main objective is to ensure successful ASEAN Chairmanship.

Being both landlocked least developed country, the Lao PDR attaches great importance to enhancing comprehensive cooperation with neighboring countries under bilateral and regional cooperation in addressing the geographical constraint. Towards this end, the country has set an ambitious goal of transforming the country from a landlocked to a land-linked country. Therefore, infrastructure development, improving infrastructure linkages and trade facilitation have been key priorities in our national development plan. On this note, we encourage the ratification of the trade facilitation agreement by the WTO members in order to accelerate its implementation in a speedy manner.

Mr. Chairman,

Private sector development and structural transformation are also of particular importance. Therefore, there is a need for us to create favorable conditions for business sector especially SMES being able to contribute in the development of hard and soft infrastructure by various means and forms namely PPP or BOT, among others. In addition, access to goods, services and markets is also critical. Therefore, it is vital that we create conducive international environment and strengthen global partnership and at this increasingly globalized world so no one will be left behind, particularly countries in special situation such as the LDCs and LLDCs. Creating favorable global environment remains an uphill task if the existing trade and economic barriers still exist. By enhancing regional and international cooperation, including the policy prosper-thy-neighbor, we will be able to overcome the daunting challenges.

In this light, the Lao PDR calls for a greater market access for LDCs to expand and diversify their exports as well as to reach SDG target of doubling LDC's shares of global export by 2020. This will become a reality only if our Development and Trading Partners progressively reduced the existing barriers so as to enable the LDCs' greater participation in regional and global value chains, including by ensuring duty-free and quota-free access to our exports, applying S&D treatment accorded to LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, UNCTAD has played an important role by focusing on the three pillars to foster trade and development and to ensure that trade and development can contribute to sustainable development. In this connection, the Lao PDR supports UNCTAD's efforts to promote a fair, inclusive, equitable, transparent and predictable international trading system and looking forward for the implementation of the Aid for E Trade Initiative. This

will help bridge digital gap as well as E commerce divides. Ensuring sustainable economic growth and development requires greater efforts both at national and international levels. In this regard, support from international organizations and other development and trading partners are crucial.

In conclusion, the Lao PDR reaffirms its strong commitment to working closely with the international community in enhancing global trade and development partnership. I wish UNCTAD XIV with a great success. I thank you.