Statement by

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at the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of
the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of
Action for the Least Developed Countries for the
Decade 2011-2020

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Mr. President,
At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. Let me also express our sincere appreciation to the Government and the people of Turkey for hosting this Review meeting with excellent arrangements and for the kind hospitality and support extended to our delegation.

My delegation would also like to commend all delegations for their hard work to prepare the draft political declaration of this Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review to which we express our support.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the distinguished Minister of Bangladesh, as the Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries.

Mr. President,

This Midterm Review of the IPOA is convened at the critical juncture after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement on Climate Change, among others. It is the crucial time that we need to review progress and challenges in the IPOA implementation and enhance our efforts and resources to achieve the visions of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enabling half of the Least Developed Countries to reach the graduation criteria by 2020.

Mr. President,

Since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action in May 2011, we have witnessed some progress in socio-economic development in the LDCs over
the past five years. However, this progress has not yet been translated into a more tangible and significant outcome. More than half (50.8%) of the population in LDCs—450 million people—lives on less than $1.25 per day and 72.5% of the population in LDCs lives on less than $2 per day. Also, it is estimated that 252 million people live with hunger in LDCs. Despite various efforts by LDCs themselves, their per capita income is still low, their productive capacity continues to be limited and national economy remains vulnerable and most of them were not able to meet MDG targets by 2015.

Mr. President,

It is recognized that the prime responsibility of national development lies on the LDCs themselves. Nevertheless, given their special needs and structural challenges, LDCs therefore need special attention and support from the international community for their development cause, including among others diversifying their economies and building their productive capacities and resilience to cope with external shocks, climate change and natural disasters. To achieve the vision of IPoA, we need to double concerted efforts of all stakeholders, LDCs, their development partners, UN and other international organizations, parliamentarians, civil society and private sector. It is of great importance to turn political commitments and vision into reality and leave no one behind while taking into account the need of LDCs to have differential and preferential treatment by the international community.

Mr. President,

At the country level, the Lao Government is strongly committed to effective implementation of IPoA as well as MDGs by mainstreaming their objectives and
priorities into our 7th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for the period 2011-2015. Over the past five years, progress has been made in the implementation of the 7th NSEDP in many areas, including a continued economic growth at an average of 7.9%. This growth facilitated broader socio-economic development, including increased employment, enhanced agricultural production, more trade, and higher public and private investment. As a result, we have achieved a reduced poverty rate of 23 percent in FY2012-2013, improved education with the net primary school enrolment ratio of 98.5% in 2014, compared to 84% recorded in 2005 and the completion of national primary education equivalency programme, improved infrastructure and social service networks, improved health services with increased number of hospitals and dispensaries. In addition, the Lao Government has also introduced a policy on free care delivery service provided from central to local levels.

Another landmark achievement for Lao PDR was its formal accession to the World Trade Organization in 2013, resulting in closer integration into the regional and global economies with a substantial increase in trade of goods and services.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that the Lao PDR will continue to face numerous challenges. These include, among others, economic vulnerabilities such as high reliance on the natural resource sector and limited access to other economic opportunities, a relatively small population and geographical constraints.

Another development challenge is ensuring that the benefits from high economic growth are evenly distributed and translated into inclusive and sustainable human development. Widening development gaps between rich and poor, urban and rural areas of the country need to be addressed. Improvement and development of infrastructure in rural areas are essential for improving livelihoods and creating equal access to public and private services.
In addition, the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the country continues to pose serious challenges, destroying lives and limiting agricultural production and expansion.

Mr. President,

Graduation from LDC status is a key long-term objective of the Government of Lao PDR since early 2000s. While our country did not reach the threshold during the last Committee for Development Policy (CDP) review in March 2015, it has nevertheless made important progress in each of the three criteria. According to ESCAP’s latest estimates, the Lao PDR has met the GNI per capita criterion for LDC graduation and may be able to meet human asset criterion in time for the 2018 review of the Committee for Development Policy if its pace of progress continues over the next few years.

In this context, the Lao PDR is committed to tackling its economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities, which will be necessary for achieving our goal of graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. The 8th Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) is an ambitious plan, focusing on the three criteria for LDC graduation and three dimensions of sustainable development and directed towards more balanced, broad-based, inclusive and sustainable growth and development while ensuring effective management and utilization of natural resources, realizing national development potential and comparative advantages and strong regional and international integration.

In addition, the Lao Government will continue its effort to achieve the unmet MDG goals and targets, including the localized MDG 9 on reducing impact of UXO, which will be implemented as localized SDG 18 for our country.

Mr. President,
Let me conclude by stressing that the international community needs to reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the LDCs and to further strengthen the global partnership for development for LDCs in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action in order to ensure its timely and effective implementation during the remainder of the Decade, while taking into account the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and SDGs in the context of the development in the LDCs.

On our part, we reiterate our unwavering political commitment to fight against poverty; create prerequisites for lifting the country from the LDC status; and pursue the path of sustainable development by mobilizing all efforts and domestic potentials while enhancing the partnership with development partners and the UN system in the country, including through the Round Table Process.

Let us work together toward the aspiration of all LDCs.

Thank you