



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Statement by

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**3rd Voluntary National Review
at the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
(10 minutes)**

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, it is my great pleasure to present the Lao PDR's 3rd Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. This year, the Lao PDR submits the third report, which arrives at an important juncture, coinciding with the country's mid-term review of the 9th NSEDP and the Committee for Development Policy's 2024 Triennial Review of the Lao PDR's graduation from the LDC status.
3. The third report focuses on both **Trend and Track Analysis**, examining progress of all 17 SDGs and One National SDG18 on "Lives Safe from UXO", while trying to make more in-depth analysis of **11 key selected SDGs**, which are revolved around **Six Transitions**: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.
4. The main context of the report reflects our national planning cycle, the assessment of the national strategies, policies and budgets in alignment with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also reflects the key areas for the country to accelerate the implementation as part of the decade of action and its re-commitment made at the SDG Summit in September last year.

Distinguished Delegates,

5. Under the leadership and guidance of the National SDG Steering Committee, the National SDG Secretariat together with the SDG focal points has prepared this VNR through series of consultations and data collection with relevant stakeholders at different levels.
6. Within the framework of South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the Lao PDR also participated in series of peer-to-peer exchange with the Republic of Azerbaijan under the UN-ESCAP VNR Twining Programme, which provided us with valuable insight about different approaches to preparing the VNR, and more broadly on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

7. Our report shows that in overall progress, none of the 18 SDGs have met the mid-points of the SDG national targets. This clearly indicates that we need greater effort across all areas of sustainable development.
8. **Eleven SDGs** are showing positive movement towards their targets, and among those numbers, Two SDGs, namely SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 10 (Reduced

Inequalities) has been identified as good performers, as they seem to be closer to reaching the mid-point of the national targets.

9. While there are **Two SDGs (SDG 16 and SDG 17) that are regressing**, highlighting areas which require urgent attention and intervention, and **Five SDGs with Insufficient data point**, which we were unable to carry trend and track analysis.

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to highlight the analysis of a few selected SDGs in more detail as follows.

10. **SDG1** on Poverty, the Lao PDR has made noteworthy progress in poverty eradication, with the proportion of persons with consumptions below that national poverty line falling. Multidimensional poverty also saw similar gains, and the number of families identified as poor, has shown a decline. The Lao PDR has also made positive progress towards achieving **SDG2** zero hunger, with declining rates of undernourishment and stunting. However, food security and malnutrition remain pressing challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas.
11. Furthermore, there is significant improvement in health outcomes in **SDG3** in recent years, with reductions in maternal mortality ratio, infant under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality rates, TBs and malaria cases, and increased birth attendance by skilled health personnel. However, some challenges persist; especially there is a need to implement a comprehensive and integrated approach to strengthening the healthcare system.
12. **SDG4** on Education, the Government's education reforms and policy changes have helped improve access to education and enrolment in the Lao PDR throughout the years. However, quality education remains a major concern and there is an urgent need to address some key challenges, including school dropout rate, the declining in the teacher workforce and student learning outcomes, to name a few.
13. **On SDG5** - promising progress has been made over the years, including the formulation of legal frameworks that provide an overarching architecture for the effective implementation of advancement of women's rights; the improved health care and service to serve the medical needs for women, and the better education attainment by women. **On SDG7** Energy, the Lao PDR has made steady progress toward achieving affordable and clean energy, notably, household with access to electricity and clean fuels and technology for cooking has increased in its proportion. However, we still face significant challenges, including limited access to electricity in rural areas, high energy costs, and the need for more investment in energy infrastructure and technology.

14. **SDG8** on growth, the impact of COVID-19 had slowed down growth to 3.3% in 2020 with slightly increased to 3.7% (2023). Labor productivity grew significantly in recent years, but remains limited and without sufficient impact on the agriculture and fishery sectors. Therefore, the Government tries to prioritize its efforts in inclusive growth, investment in human capital, demographic transition and social protection, among others.
15. On **SDG9**, the Lao PDR has made notable improvements in transport infrastructure (particularly in rural areas) and regional connectivity. The majority of the rural populations now live in villages with all-weather road access. Regional transport linkages have improved connectivity to neighboring countries but the length and quality of road infrastructure still needs improvement, especially in rural areas, while urban areas need better transport infrastructure and services.
16. On climate change **SDG13** - the Government of Lao PDR submitted its revised NDC including the net-zero goals, along with an unconditional emission reduction target of 60% and a conditional emissions reduction target of up to 70% by 2030. The country has strengthened mitigation measures in the forestry and energy sectors and applied gender equality perspectives while revising the NDC, and we also focuses on a circular economy as a key instrument to pursue a low carbon development pathway.
17. Lastly, on the National **SDG18: Lives Safe from UXO**. There has been progress in clearance of UXO. From 1996 to 2024, more than 1.9 million UXO were found and destroyed from more than 80,000 hectares of land, making agricultural land safe for farmers and freeing up other areas for development.
18. However, despite these numbers, the scale and impact of the UXO problem far exceeds the resources and capacities available to deal with it. Nevertheless, the Government has prioritized the strengthening of national capacity for efficiency, the development of management policy and mainstreaming UXO into relevant sector, as well as developing a comprehensive resource mobilization and strategy and promoting innovation solutions, among others.

Distinguished Delegates,

19. Our data in the third report imply that while Lao PDR is making progress on a number of SDGs, significant challenges remain. Three key implications have emerged, specifically: the limited data availability suggests a need for improved data collection and reporting mechanisms to accurately track progress and inform decision-making. Moreover, the far-reaching progress for numbers of SDGs indicates that significant efforts and resources are required to bridge the gap between

current status and the mid-point targets. In addition, enhancing data availability and quality for all SDGs is crucial for effective monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making to ensure that interventions are targeted and impactful.

20. Through the process of the third VNR, we would like to emphasize on the way forwards that need greater efforts to address as follows:

- **First**, the strong national commitment and ownership remains a pinnacle in paving the national pathway toward green and sustainable development directory.
- **Second**, many SDGs are still lacking behind and face numerous challenges. We need targeted interventions and investments that are crucial to get the country back on track to achieve the SDGs targets, including the need to strengthen capacity building and resilience in overcoming obstacles that hinder national development path.
- **Third**, greater prioritization and more integrated localization are crucial; specifically SDG implementation must closely align with the national planning, LDC graduation and coherence with the current development trajectory.
- **Fourth**, putting people and community at the heart of sustainable development through enhancing engagement, inclusivity and participatory of local community is fundamental to ensure that no one is left behind.
- **Fifth**, partnership for the goals through the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approaches, specifically strengthening public awareness for SDGs in ensuring greater support and collaboration are key essential for SDG realization.
- **Last but not least**, the support from development partners and international organizations remain fundamental, specifically they should honour their previous commitment and further enhance support in terms of finance, technical expertise, knowledge sharing, capacity building and technology transfer to ensure that no one and no country are left behind.

Distinguished Delegates,

21. In conclusion, with only six years remaining until the 2030, I would like to reaffirm the Lao PDR's strong commitment to eradicate poverty and pursue the path of sustainable development and will continue to work closely with all partners in ensuring the progress of SDGs. Taking this opportunity, I wish to sincerely thank the development partners and international organizations for their continued support and assistance that have, to a great extent, contributed to the development endeavor of our country over the past years. **[Thank you]**