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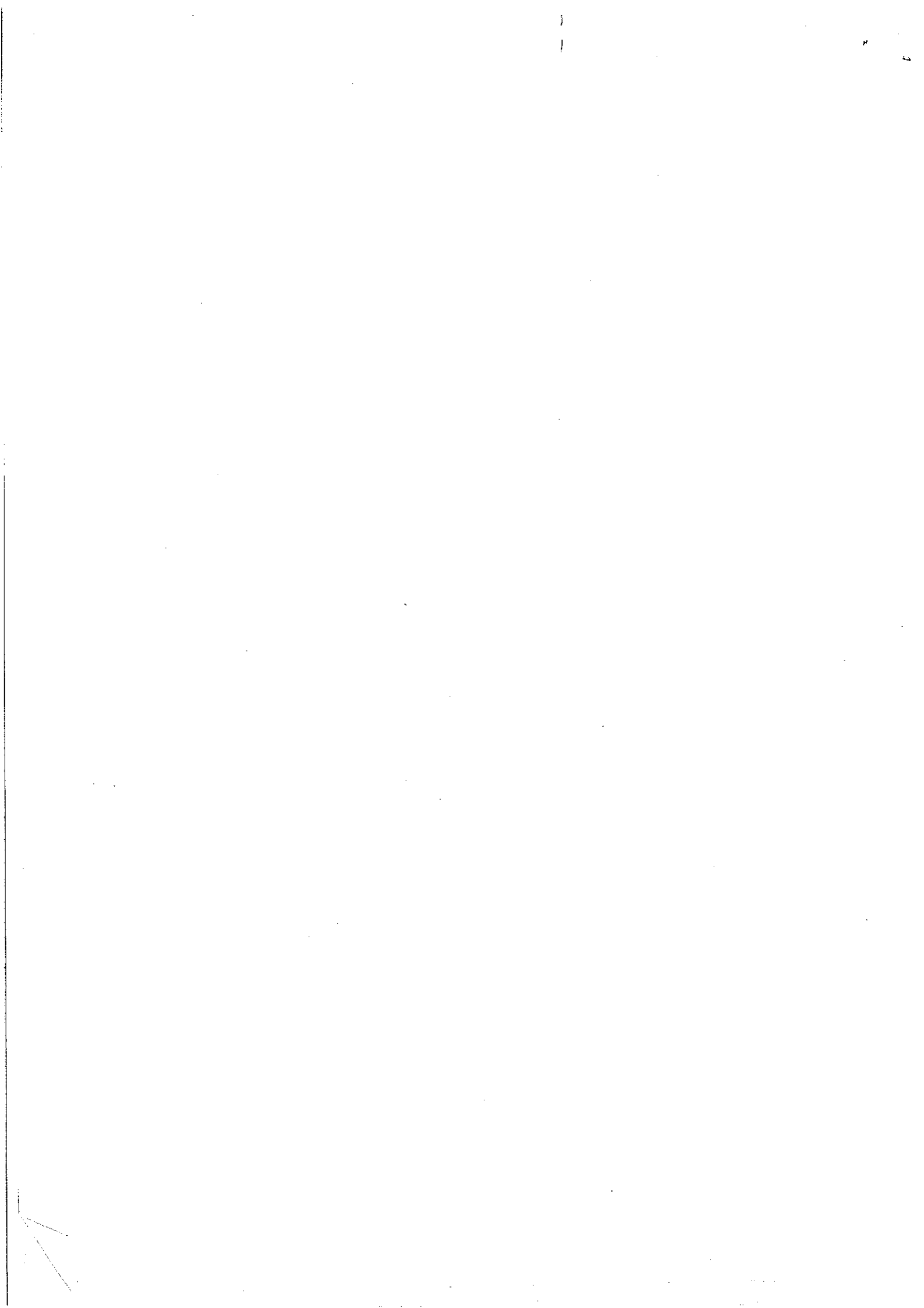
LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Statement

by

H.E. Dr. Kikeo Chanthaboury,
Vice Minister of Planning and Investment
of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the Ministerial Segment of the 72nd Session of the UNESCAP

Bangkok, 18 May 2016



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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as chairperson of the 72nd Session of the UNESCAP, held under the theme "Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development". My delegation would also like to commend the ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent arrangements made for our session, including the organization of a series of ministerial panels and high-level events as well as for the preparation of various important reports.

Mr. Chairperson,

The world today has undergone complex situation. Natural environment continues to be threatened and damaged leading to climate imbalance and more frequent occurrence of natural disasters. Political and social unrests and armed conflicts have still occurred in different parts of the world that have yet been any sign of immediate resolution. Likewise, the global economic recovery remains slow, which has impacted regional growth while widening inequalities hinder inclusive economic growth, undermine social cohesion and threaten environmental sustainability. All of this has presented major constraints and unfavourable environment for the developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones in order to address their special needs and pursue their sustainable development.

The 72nd session of the Commission is convened at the critical juncture after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement on Climate Change as well as the halfway of the implementation of Istanbul Program of Action for the LDCs, among others. It is the time that we need to translate political commitments and development agenda at the global level into national action and develop well-functioning coordination and implementation mechanisms so as to ensure sustainable development for all, leaving no one behind.

We share the view that our region is recognized for its economic and development success and growing integration with strong determination to turn global commitments into reality at the national level. All of this will certainly drive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to more inclusive sustainable growth and development in the world at large.

In this context, I would like to stress that all 36 countries with special needs in Asia and the Pacific face a number of common and divergent challenges, given their geographical diversity and a variety of specific structural vulnerabilities. Therefore, they need to be accorded special attention and support from the international community for their development cause, including diversifying their economies and building their productive capacities and resilience to cope with external shocks, climate change and natural disasters.



Mr. Chairman,

Given the LDC experience in the MDGs implementation, efforts to reduce poverty and improve social conditions cannot be sustained over the long term without rapid and inclusive economic progress. Building productive capacity is therefore essential to achieving lasting social progress. Education, women's empowerment, quality health care and other forms of social progress contribute to economic growth. History has also shown that growth can only be sustained through effective stewardship of the natural resources and environmental services that fuel the economy.

We share the view that the effective use of science, technology and innovation (STI) is a key means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Recognizing the important role of STI, we encourage the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation, established last year by the 71st session of the Commission to help the member states deal with issues relating to science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

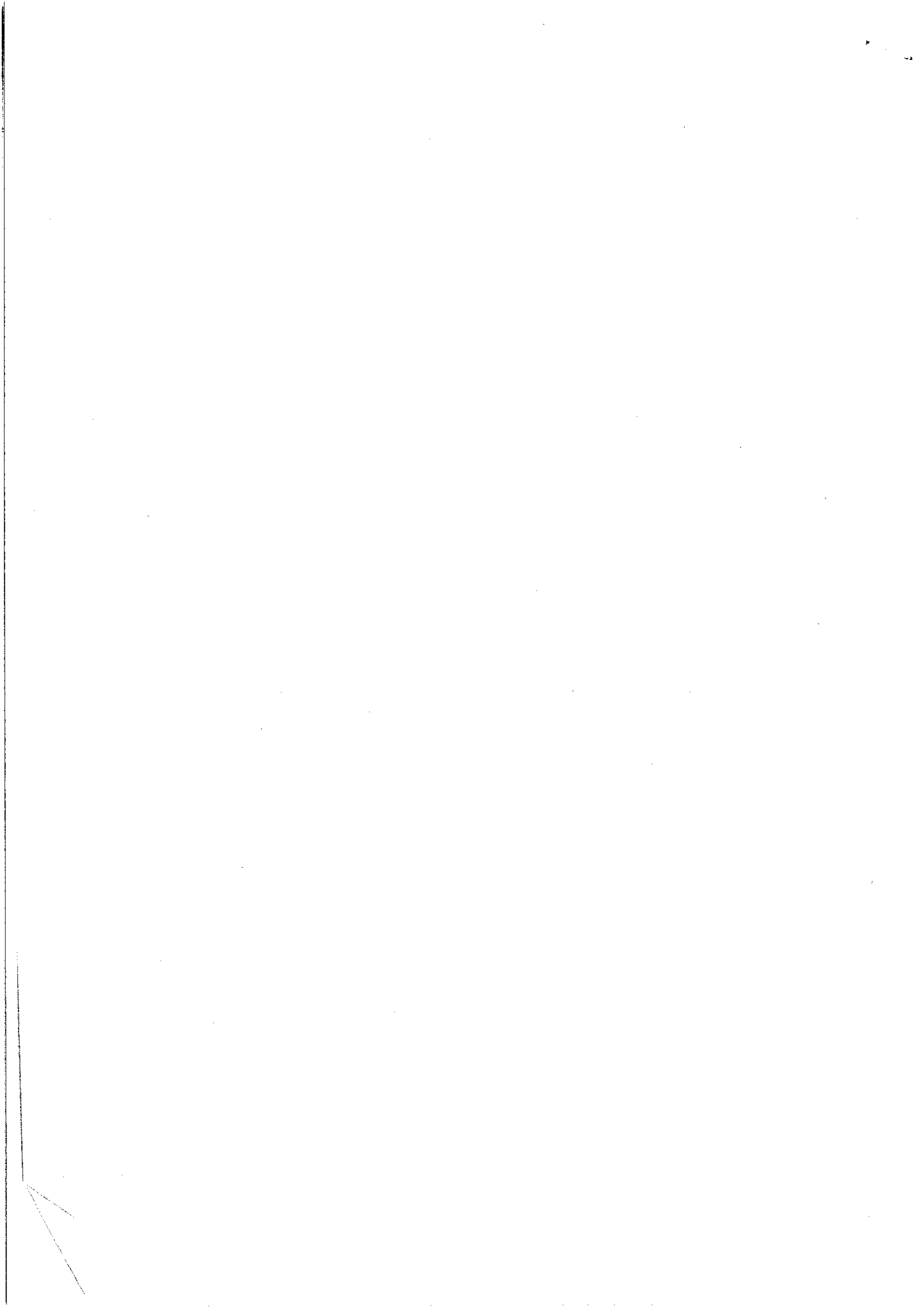
We believe that STI can create new economic opportunities, which means creating jobs and wealth in a manner that is environmentally sound and socially inclusive. As such, it has the potential to be one of the primary engines powering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially by countries with special needs. To this end, it will be essential for countries to accelerate the shift towards a knowledge based economy and develop appropriate STI action plans. The role of the private sector and research institutions will also be of great importance to the government efforts in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the country level, being both least developed and landlocked country while recognizing special challenges and development needs, the Lao Government is strongly committed to effective implementation of both Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action as well as MDGs by mainstreaming their objectives and priorities into our National Socio-Economic Development Plans.

Over the past years, progress has been made in the implementation of the MDGs in many areas including the resettlement and allocation of stable jobs for the people, and improved infrastructure and social service networks which resulted in a reduced poverty rate of 23.2 percent in FY2012-2013. The economy grew steadily from 2011-15, with GDP growth consistently between 7 and 8 percent annually. This growth facilitated broader socio-economic development, including increased employment, enhanced agricultural production, more trade, and higher public and private investment. A 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, potential economic vulnerabilities such as high reliance on the natural resource sector and limited access to other economic opportunities, a relatively small population, absence of social safety nets and geographical constraints. Reducing such economic vulnerabilities through improvements in social safety nets, improved employment and job security, stabilization of exports of goods and services, and addressing merchandise export concentration is critical for LDC graduation, as well as strengthening our country's competitiveness in the newly established ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Economic development in the future will give more priority to non-resource sectors, particularly development of small and medium-sized enterprises both in terms of quantity and quality.



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. The correlation between UXO contamination and the prevalence of poverty is clear, with 42 of the 46 poorest districts affected.

Mr. Chairperson,

The 8th NSEDP of the Lao PDR focuses on the three criteria for LDC graduation and three dimensions of sustainable development. Its overall objective is to ensure continued political stability, peace and order in the society; the poverty of the people is reduced significantly in all areas; the country is developed out of the status of LDC by 2020 through continuous, inclusive and sustainable growth; maximum effective management and utilization of natural resources; the development enhanced through the national potentials and advantages; participated in regional and international integration with ownership. We can say that 45% out of about 150 M&E performance indicators of our M&E Framework is linked with SDGs.

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. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by stressing that to achieve our development objective, the Lao Government has mobilized all efforts and domestic potentials for enhancing quality growth and inclusive development. At the same time, national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment, the availability of appropriate knowledge, technologies, innovation and resources as well as capacity-building.

Having recognized the importance of partnership, the Government has undertaken policy dialogues with development partners and the UN system, including through the Round Table Process and most recently the "Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation" was endorsed at the 12th High Level Roundtable meeting in Vientiane last November. It seeks to build a partnership that is broader, more inclusive and more relevant to the national circumstances, which can also expand the envelope of resources available for development.

On that note, we are of the view that the international community has to pursue policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors, and to effectively implement SDG 17 which holds the key to the successful and effective implementation of SDGs.

I thank you.

