Mr. Chair,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao Government, I would like to commend you, Mr. Chairperson, on your election as Chairperson of the 75th Session of the Commission. Taking this opportunity, I wish to join the previous speakers in extending my sincere congratulations to the Thai people on the auspicious occasion of coronation of His Majesty the King early this month.

Mr. Chair,

Over the past few years, Asia-Pacific region has continued to experience a dynamic and rapid economic growth. Nevertheless, much more remains to be done in order to ensure the inclusive growth which will contribute to sustainable development in the region and world at large. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the theme of this year’s session, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", reflecting our common aspiration in enhancing inclusive economic prosperity and sustainable development of the people in our region.
Let us not be overwhelmed by the fact that our region is the world’s fastest-growing economic powerhouse as existing inequality represents a potential threat for the stability and the development of many developing countries. Inequality is inevitable and systematically existing in various forms resulting in the so-called groups of advantaged and disadvantaged people. Irrespective of improved living standard arisen from economic gain, the gap between the rich and the poor has not been narrowed, and yet remain at the same level of gravity. In this connection, addressing poverty and the development gap among states is of paramount importance.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of the Lao PDR remains strongly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and particularly the SDGs. Following the presentation of its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018, the country has taken important steps forward on drafting the National SDGs Roadmap along with the Communication Work Plan, aiming at establishing a clear structure of how each stakeholder both from public and private sectors can meaningfully take part in the SDGs implementation. As recommended by the VNR, some key activities planned for this year include broadening SDGs advocacy campaign with a number of activities and workshops at technical and national levels by engaging cross-ministerial focal points to mobilize all walks of life to better understand more about the SDGs and how important their contribution and inclusion is in order to achieve the goals at national level.

To ensure inclusive development, the Lao Government has emphasized that rural development and poverty reduction remain at the core of our national development strategy reflected by the ongoing efforts to improve rural infrastructure, access to decent roads and services that will make important contribution to poverty reduction in rural area, enhancing market access for agricultural products, improving livelihood opportunities, and ensuring everyone's inclusiveness and equality. In addition, local people, especially all ethnic groups, who traditionally live in mountainous and remote areas, have been more empowered and protected under the National Social Protection Strategy, aimed at improving accessibility for healthcare and education, among others.
Mr. Chair,

We all acknowledge that people’s empowerment and inclusion are considered fundamental components to sustainable development of the community. In this context, the Lao Government has embraced and taken part in all efforts undertaken within the frameworks of regional and sub-regional mechanisms namely ASEAN, GMS, MRC, among others. We are of the view that, the Belt and Road Initiative is making an important contribution to national effort in enhancing regional connectivity, infrastructure development, promoting the transformation of the Lao PDR from a landlocked into a land-linked country, strengthening domestic and regional trade facilitation, enhancing economic cooperation, and further extending people-to-people connectivity. Therefore, we firmly believe that regional cooperation plays an essential role, for instance, in creating more job opportunities for local people, generating a wider range of income from the improved market accessibility and availability, all of which will ultimately result in improving people’s well-being and empowering people.

The Lao PDR recognizes the vital role of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in providing additional support and addressing special needs of countries in special situations namely LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to realize their development objectives. In this connection, UNESCAP has provided effective forum to promote regional policy coordination and coherence, ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, through strengthened partnership between all member states and development partners. At a time when we are witnessing gradual decrease of Official Development Assistance (ODA) globally, we look forward to the commitment made by our development partners to provide 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA to developing countries including LLDCs to be realized soon. In this regard, the Lao Government reaffirms its commitment to continue working closely with the international community, UN Agencies, intergovernmental organizations to achieve its national development goals and global development agendas.

In conclusion, I once again would like to express my gratitude to all development partners, regional and international organizations, for your continued valuable assistance extended to the Lao PDR in pursuing our development endeavors. I wish the 75th Session of Commission a great success.

I thank you