STATEMENT BY

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On Agenda Item 28 (a-d): Social Development

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the work of the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I pledge my delegation full support and cooperation to you in discharging your duty through the session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of Malaysia on behalf of ASEAN; and the Representative of Fiji speaking on behalf of G77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Social development constitutes the ultimate objective of development as a whole, thus ensuring the well-being of people in society. Millennium Development Goals is a clear testimony to how our world community attaches great importance to social development. However, unfortunately in many countries, most of the social related MDG targets are unlikely to met by 2015. This is due to the increasing complexity and magnitude of global economic and social development challenges that have extensive impacts on developing countries, especially the most vulnerable one. Social inequalities, migration and unemployment among youth have exacerbated poverty in many part of the world.

Against such a backdrop, international community must sincerely put their efforts in addressing the root causes of poverty and social inequalities in a more cohesive and holistic manner. We need to redouble our effort in promoting international cooperation for development on the basis of genuine partnership. In this context, my delegation welcomes the Outcome of the High-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Disabilities and Development, and also commends the successful conclusion of the High level dialogue on Migration and Development just concluded last week with the view to strengthening and supporting the international community's efforts in pursuing a common social development objective.
Mr. Chairman,

Over the past decade the Lao Government has continued to do its utmost in achieving its national social development objective as well as to strive for the ultimate goal of bringing the country out of LDC status by 2020. The implementation of the 7th Five-Year National Socio-economic Development Plan (2011-2015) has scored an impressive outcome over the past years. In this note, national economy continues to grow with GDP reached 8.2% in the past three consecutive years. Government's investment in public sectors reached 67% of gross national expenditure.

On the social front, the government continues to set education as national priority sector for social development with an emphasis on human resource development. Primary and tertiary education has been expanded to rural and remote area. Inclusive Education Classrooms for disable students are also introduced as a pilot project in the capital and some big cities. Under the National Strategy on Education and guidance, the education sector has undergone extensive reform, with an aim at improving national education standard and making education accessible for all.

On the issue of gender equality and advancement of women, gender parity has steadily been improved in all levels of national education system. This improvement has been made as a result of the Government's policy to promote the role of women in decision-making process in both public and private sectors. Women's representation in the current National Assembly legislature is 25%. Women participation in public and private workforce has also been gradually increased in all sectors.

In the area of public health, the Lao Government has exerted its utmost effort to improve public healthcare by introducing healthcare scheme such as free vaccination under the national vaccination protocol, a pilot project to provide free medical care at central hospitals for elderly people and marginalized group of persons, promoting family planning and scaling up nutrition for mother and child, free medical treatment for pregnant women and children under the age of five years. This scheme has significantly
contributed to the decline in maternal and child mortality in the recent years. At present, national healthcare service network covers 98% of the rural and remote areas.

Youth development and participation in social activities have been widely promoted within schools, institutions, public and private sectors across the country. One of the great successes in this activity is the establishment of a Young Entrepreneurs Association of Laos, which was formed under the auspices of the Lao Youth Union in 2005 with an objective as a volunteer-driven and non-profit organization to support young people in doing business.

The government continues to improve and build national development capacity, particularly infrastructure, capacity building and job creation in the poverty stricken, rural and remote areas. In the last two years more than 126,000 people completed new occupational training and skills. Job creation target has reached 47% of the five-year target plan. At the same time, rights and benefits of labourers has been gradually assured by related laws and regulations.

Mr. Chairman

Yet much more needs to be done. Addressing inequalities between the have and the have-not, narrowing development gap between rural and urban, building national capacity and human resource development remains a great challenge for the Lao PDR in the years ahead. To this end, my delegation would like to express our sincere appreciation to development partners and donor countries for rendering their supports and cooperation. The Lao government stands ready to work together with the international community for the prosperity and the wellbeing of its people that will contribute to regional and international peace and stability at large.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman