Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his report on agenda item 28.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a belief that parity between women and men is not only a due responsibility to the promotion and protection of women’s right but it is also a pathway to national prosperity and success. It has been proved that economic growth is interrelated to greater output per worker. In this connection, women’s empowerment will enhance national productivity and poverty eradication. Women’s education, health and nutrition will contribute to the reduction of high maternal and child mortality rate, and reduction of gender-based violence has a positive impact on children development and their future.

In light of this importance, the Lao Government is strongly committed to the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women. This is clearly reflected in both constitutional framework and policy. Over the past years, the Lao Government adopted numbers of measures and strategies consolidated with the following pillars:

Firstly, ensure the legitimate rights of Lao women in all areas under its Constitution. To this end, numbers of law and regulation had been under revision by relevant authorities. In line with the Law on the Development and Protection of Women and the Law on Family, the Penal Law criminalizes discrimination against women. The Law on labour provides equal access to employment.

Secondly, the Second National Strategy on the Advancement of Women (2011-2015) and the Lao Women’s Development Plan (2011-2015) were adopted and contain six programs and thirty-two projects with the concrete objectives to promoting political consciousness, upgrading legal knowledge for women, capacity building including vocational training, skills development and small business for women from central to grass roots level.
Thirdly, the women organizational structure at all levels has been strengthened for instance, the Lao Women’s Caucus at the National Assembly was formed in 2003 composed of all female members in order to address issues faced by women in parliament. Under the supervision of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW), The Lao Women’s Union (LWU) has been working actively with all relevant stakeholders in the society to mainstream gender issue into all development frameworks.

Fourthly, regional and international cooperation has been increasingly enhanced. The Lao PDR has acceded to a number of international instruments on the promotion and advancement of women, such as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1969, CEDAW, and CRC. Within ASEAN, the Lao PDR actively coordinates and participates in regional mechanisms and activities. As a result of the implementation of this policy, considerable progress has been made, for instance, in term of employment, women and men share equal proportion of the total workforce. In 2012, share of women in the non-agricultural sectors has been gradually increased by 34%. The number of women in our National Assembly accounts for 25% of the total members. Likewise, we are progressing steadily towards the achievement of the 15% targets set with regard to women's representation at all decision-making levels by 2015.

In relation to education, Gender Parity Index (GPI) at schools has been steadily improved. Girls’ enrolment at primary schools and higher education has been gradually increased. To date, female students enrolled at primary schools are accountable for 48% of the total 890,000 students.

In the area of public health, the Lao Government has exerted its utmost effort to improve public healthcare by introducing healthcare scheme for women such as 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.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite notable progress made, the Lao PDR remains confronted with numbers of challenges. Among others, there is still an emerging gender disparity in higher education enrollment, which is often associated with poverty. Young women and girls, especially those from economically disadvantaged demographics, often risk to fall victims of trafficking in persons.

Indeed, the institutional and legal framework, by and large, exists and criminalizes violence against women. What is still lacking, obviously, is the capacity of related institutions to implement and enforce the exiting instruments and mechanisms.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by reaffirming the Lao government’s commitment to take appropriate measures in continuing to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls. My delegation would like to express its sincere gratitude to the UN system and other development partners for their valuable supports rendered to the Lao government to fulfill its endeavor in this area.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman