STATEMENT BY
Mr. Kanya Khammoungkhoun, the Representative of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to the United Nations
At The 68th Session of the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
On Agenda Item 65: Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children

New York, 17 October 2013
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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary General for his reports made available under this important agenda item 65: "Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children".

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of Malaysia on behalf of ASEAN.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past year, we have been witnessing children worldwide improved their physical and mental integrity and wellbeing. However, such progress has been uneven. While many children celebrate their birthday with an expensive cake and a bunch of luxurious gifts, millions of children fail to go to school and others go to bed in hunger every night just because of inequality and underdevelopment that we all do not share. As highlighted in the Secretary General’s report, children are often vulnerable and most affected by major challenges the world faces today such as poverty, hunger, high mortality rate, conflicts and various forms of violation and exploitation.

In light of such backdrop, there is an increasing need for the international community to effectively deal with fundamental needs and challenges faced by children around the world. The promotion and protection of the rights of children is a shared responsibility of the global community and therefore, the adoption of the Outcome Document of the United Nations General Assembly’s Special Session on Children in 2002 “A World Fit for Children” remains pertinent to this end. In this context, we must intensify our efforts in implementing the globally agreed commitments pertained to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, including the MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

The Lao PDR has always put children in the heart of the Government development strategy and policy. In this regard, the Government has adopted a policy and relevant laws on the
promotion and protection of the rights of children such as the Law on Education, the Law on Hygiene, Sanitation and Health Promotion, amended Labor Law, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children, and the National Plan of Action for Children, among others. This policy and national legal framework is consistent with the related international laws and conventions, including the Convention on Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, to which the Lao PDR is a party.

In addition, given the importance of the issue of children, the Lao Government has long established The National Commission for Mother and Children (NCMC), which has a strong mandate to protect and promote the rights of children as well to provide policy recommendation on and monitor the nationwide implementation of the Government policy on Children.

In education sector, the Government has adopted a National Strategy and Plan of Action on Education that offers free and compulsory primary education for all school-age children. The Lao PDR has made a considerable progress towards Universal Primary Education with a robust achievement of 98 per cent net enrolment ratio (NER) both girls and boys. Number of children’s enrolment at secondary schools and higher education has been gradually increased. This has brought about a positive, holistic early childhood development.

In the area of public health, the Government has paid special attention to the promotion of healthcare for mother and children by adopting a Comprehensive National Strategy and Plan of Action on Health with an aim to reduce maternal and child mortality. In this context, the implementation of the annual national campaigns and free vaccination for women and children under the national vaccination protocol, the comprehensive policy and strategy on nutrition for mothers and young children, the national campaigns and strategy on combating HIV/AIDS infection from mother to child, the early intervention and free medical treatment for pregnant women and children under the age of five years, all this has significantly contributed to the decline in maternal and child mortality in the recent years.

At regional level, the Lao Government is actively contributing to the implementing of the ASEAN's Declaration on the Commitment of Children and the Plan of Action for Children with an aim to promote and enhance regional cooperation and assistance in the field of promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the above-mentioned policy and measures that the Lao Government has undertaken, as a Least developed and landlocked country, the Lao PDR remains confronted with numbers of setback and challenge, such as high child mortality rate, especially in the remote and hard-to-access rural areas, disparity in boy and girl's enrollment in higher education, lack of quality teachers and schooling materials. This challenge requires continued support and cooperation from the international community. In this context, the Lao Government would like to express its gratitude to all development partners including the UN system, especially UNICEF for their long standing partnership in the promotion and protection of the rights of the children in the Lao PDR. We do hope that such good cooperation would continue to be further enhanced in the years to come.

I thank you.