

Delegation from the Lao People's Democratic Republic
Position Paper for the General Assembly Third Committee

The topics before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Third Committee (GA3) are Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities; Combating Human Trafficking; and Strengthening Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance. The Lao People's Democratic Republic recognizes the need for strong international cooperation to monitor and implement access to vital human rights, and looks forward to multilaterally discussing these topics with Member States at the upcoming conference.

I. Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities

The embodiment of inclusion is still lacking in least developed countries (LDC). Lao PDR faces the problem and already included children with disabilities in schools. Generally, inclusion means in the first place the access to basic education so that employment options can be found for disabled persons. Still, it is problematic to guarantee an accessible environment for people, especially for those in wheelchairs. However, there is no concrete number of persons with disabilities in Laos, mostly created by unexploded ordnance (UXO) explosions. Those bombs are scattered all over the country and are the result of the Vietnam War. To this day, a large part of the country cannot be entered due to unexploded ordnance. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) estimates that around 8% citizens of the Lao population live with a certain disability which means 400.000 persons of the whole population. What comes in hand with having a disability in a developing country is mostly the life situation of poverty, limited access to education and health institutions as well as limited opportunities for employment. Lao PDR is concerned with the issue of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Lao communities and hopes for a nation-wide implementation to guarantee equality in the country and offer education and employment for all disabled citizens.

The Government of Lao PDR has adopted a number of laws and policies to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. The law says that every person is equal before the law and children with disabilities have the right to visit a regular primary school and secondary school. Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) is one example on how to integrate persons with disabilities in communities, as well as offering regular services to maximize their physical and mental abilities. Yet, disabled persons can visit health institutions at any time due to a stipulation by law. However, disabled persons in hard-to-reach areas mostly do not know what they are entitled to and thus feel excluded and cannot profit from the health benefits they would get.

Still, Lao PDR is dependent on international support to reach all persons with disabilities. Lao PDR stresses the need for Member States to coordinate a program for all persons with disabilities so that they know their rights and can profit from them, health-wise, education-wise and employment-wise. Lao PDR suggests a paper for all disabled people that comes in hand with an effective implementation and enforcement of existing laws and policies, tied up to already proofed programs. The main field that needs to be improved in is equal opportunities for employment and training, as well as the reduction of poverty and the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the country. The further development of a creation of special need institutions is indispensable. It is hard for Lao PDR to guarantee reasonable accommodation that fit to learners and employees with mental, visual, hearing and speech disabilities. In this case, Lao PDR sees the need of financial help from Member States to build such accommodations. Lao PDR proposes for Member States to create a curriculum for inclusive teaching from countries that have established inclusive teaching for a longer period and can help the country as a role model. Besides, Lao PDR urges support for Member States for the establishment of employment possibilities for disabled people and hopes for experienced suggestions to implement in Lao PDR.

II. Combating Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon that stems largely from political instability, economic disparities, and migration opportunities. Due to income uncertainty and poverty in home communities, human trafficking often starts voluntarily when people decide to move away in search of better economic conditions before they happen to be tricked or exploited. As stated in the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), human trafficking can be defined as "the act of recruitment, transport, receipt, and harboring of people, by means of threat or use of force, fraud, coercion, deception, debt bondage, or abuse of power, for the purpose of sexual or labor exploitation." According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there are 20.9 million victims of labor trafficking worldwide. Human trafficking is on the rise in Asia and the Pacific, particularly in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

(GMS). Lao PDR is deeply concerned and hopes that all efforts can be taken to combat human trafficking in order to promote and protect human rights.

As a landlocked country, Lao PDR is a primary source for human trafficking activities, with Lao nationals, especially women and girls, being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor in various neighboring countries, mainly Thailand. Lao PDR has made significant efforts to combat human trafficking through several legislation efforts. The national government increased law enforcements to prevent trafficking of children and women. Further, efforts to investigate and punish trafficking offenders were strengthened. The Laotian government has also created a National Steering Committee on Human Trafficking (NSC) and participates in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT). In addition, Lao PDR strongly supports international instruments on human trafficking, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

Much of Lao PDR assistance depends on support and financial aid from international organizations. Since a lack of resources remains the biggest challenge to the Laotian government's ability to tackle issues of human trafficking, Lao PDR stresses the need for Member States to lead and coordinate efforts to help developing countries. As such, Lao PDR recommends increased coordination between Member States to assist in victim identification and protection. These proposals would require both financial support and improved transparency by collecting and sharing information on anti-trafficking activities. As such practices are implemented, the Laotian government will be able to increase expenditures from the anti-trafficking budget, and the human rights of Lao nationals can be more fully realized and protected.

III. Strengthening Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance

Lao PDR is exposed to natural disasters like flooding, cyclones, drought and earthquakes. This makes the country vulnerable whenever an ecological disaster arises due to the lack of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Although the Government of Lao has acknowledged disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a national priority, there are still not enough strategies to act immediately. Lao PDR is deeply concerned and hopes that all efforts can be taken to strengthen humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

Due to high costs, Lao PDR cannot afford an early warning system for ecological disasters, which leads to unpreparedness in such occasions. However, the regional United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) office offers regular simulations for the government employees to be prepared in such cases. To engage disaster relief assistance, the government invested in the infrastructure and started working with the World Bank to establish procedures for disaster management. One significant goal is, however, to involve and reach all Lao citizens in the process, especially those, who live in mountainous or hard to reach areas. In 2018, the rupture of the dam shook the south east of Laos. About 6000 Laotians became homeless and many Cambodians had to be evacuated at the border. During this period, Laos was dependent on the help of its neighboring countries, which used special forces to search for missing persons. This devastating situation showed how necessary a uniform for disaster relief assistance is. Lao PDR strongly supports the efforts of General Assembly Third Committee in terms of strengthening humanitarian and disaster relief assistance and hopes for help of the creation of a disaster relief assistance.

Lao PDR stresses the need for Member States to create a plan for humanitarian and disaster relief assistance in disaster events. Lao PDR recommends a close partnership with Member States to learn from developed countries, as well as countries that face and faced humanitarian and ecological disasters due to their geographical location. It is of great interest for all Member States to save lives and homes, as well as agricultural land. As such procedures like simulations for government staff are already implemented in Laos, there is a need of specification of a how-to, calling Member States to share their models of disaster relief assistance. Moreover, Lao PDR will be able to increase expenditures from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLSW) to provide help to disaster victims, however, much of Lao PDR assistance depends on support and financial aid from international organizations during disaster events. Lao PDR sees the need of the creation of a special unit that is trained for humanitarian and ecological disasters, especially in areas that are vulnerable, but also in regions that are not likely to be affected. Potential ways to improve the already existing forms is to work on a more efficient emergency management to avoid homelessness and poverty after a disaster, as well as a fast reconstruction of affected villages and cities.