

**Welcoming Remarks**  
**by H.E. Saleumxay KOMMASITH,**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR**  
**at the Opening Ceremony of**  
**the 49<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting**

24 July 2016, Vientiane

- **His Excellency Thongloun SISOULITH, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic,**
- **ASEAN Foreign Ministers,**
- **Secretary-General of ASEAN,**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great honor and privilege to express my deep and sincere appreciation to His Excellency Thongloun SISOULITH, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for being here today to officiate the Opening Ceremony of the 49<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

I would also like to warmly welcome ASEAN Foreign Ministers and Foreign Ministers of Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Norway, and all delegates to Vientiane.

**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Lao PDR is honored to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship at a crucial time, immediately after the launch of the ASEAN Community, and the adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its integral documents by ASEAN Leaders at the 27<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit last year. As such, the slogan: ***“Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”*** has been introduced by the Lao PDR as a theme of ASEAN Chairmanship 2016.

The AMM Retreat held in February 2016 has had in-depth discussions on the implementation of the APSC Blueprint 2025 and adopted 8 priorities for Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship, namely

- implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025,
- narrowing development gap,

- trade facilitation,
- small and medium enterprise development,
- tourism development,
- connectivity,
- transition from informal employment to formal employment towards decent work promotion in ASEAN, and
- reinforcing cultural heritage cooperation in ASEAN.

These priorities are relevant to ASEAN's objectives and also complement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are pleased to note that with efforts of all ASEAN Member States, the implementation of the APSC Blueprint 2025 and the 8 priorities have been progressing well.

The APSC Blueprint 2025 is envisaged to build upon the achievements attained through implementation of the earlier Blueprint and upholds the purpose of preserving regional peace and stability aimed at further consolidating and strengthening the ASEAN Community and ensuring that the peoples and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment and also benefit from the process of ASEAN integration and community building. Our relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies under the APSC had met to discuss mainstreaming of the APSC Blueprint into their respective agenda, programmes and priorities for effective implementation.

Progress is also being made in the implementation of the priorities. To name a few, the Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN was endorsed by the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Socio-Cultural Community Council, while the IAI Work Plan II, ASEAN Connectivity 2025, the Declaration on Reinforcing Cultural Heritage Cooperation in ASEAN, ASEAN Trade Facilitation Framework, ASEAN Framework on Access of SMEs to Finance, Enabling Environment for SMEs Establishment and Development are in the process of finalization.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

ASEAN has come a long way since its inception in 1967. It has gone through various stages and gradual evolution, from original 5 founding countries to 10 Member States and the establishment of ASEAN Community which was officially announced on 31 December 2015. Today, ASEAN has been recognized as a successful intergovernmental regional organization.

The achievements of ASEAN over the past 49 years have been possible thanks to the favorable environment of peace and stability in the region, and our collective efforts as well as cooperation and support of our Dialogue Partners and external parties in accordance with the ASEAN principles and ASEAN way, based on the particularity and reality of the region.

The ASEAN initiated frameworks, namely ASEAN+1, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS) provide key platforms for not only ASEAN to engage with its Dialogue Partners and external partners, but also for the dialogue partners, especially the major powers to engage one another, thereby contributing to enhancing mutual understanding, strategic trust, and creating an environment conducive to the promotion of peace, stability and development cooperation in the region and the world. ASEAN will pursue an outward-looking policy as well as enhance ASEAN centrality in shaping the evolving regional architecture that is built upon ASEAN-led mechanism.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, the regional and global landscape is undergoing complex and rapid changes, offering both opportunities and challenges. The traditional and non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism, extremism, cyber security, irregular migration, trafficking in persons, natural disasters, climate change, poverty, infectious diseases, drug smuggling and maritime issues as well as developments in many parts of the world such as Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe have caused concern for the international community. In addition, the relations between the major powers, the recent Brexit among others, are other developments that we should follow closely. However, despite conflicts and challenges that have occurred in different parts of the world, in general, peace, stability and development cooperation among nations remain the prevailing trend of this era. Our collective efforts are

imperative to seize opportunities and address challenges facing various parts of the world in an effective manner.

Against this backdrop, the 49<sup>th</sup> AMM and related Meetings present us a good opportunity to discuss how to further strengthen our collective efforts in effectively implementing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, including the APSC Blueprint 2025 in order to strengthen the ASEAN Community which is on-going process and to engage our Dialogue Partners and external parties to enhance cooperative relations with them under the ASEAN-led mechanisms, as well as to exchange candid and constructive views on regional and international issues of common interest and concern, thereby contributing to the common cause of the maintenance and promotion of regional and international peace, stability and development cooperation.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am confident that with the continued support and cooperation of ASEAN Colleagues and Colleagues from Dialogue Partners and external parties, the 49<sup>th</sup> AMM and other related Meetings would be crowned with success, laying firm foundation for the fruitful 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and related Summits which will be convened in September 2016, here in Vientiane.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Thongloun SISOULITH, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic as the Chairman of ASEAN 2016 for officiating this Opening Ceremony.

I sincerely thank you all for the continued support, assistance and cooperation extended to the Lao PDR in preparations for and during our ASEAN Chairmanship.

I thank you.

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