

**Statement to the
112th Session of the
International Organization for Migration Council
Geneva Switzerland**

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- H.E.
 - Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset and on behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to express that I am proud and honored to represent the Government and lead the Lao PDR's delegation to participate in this auspicious session as well as deliver the statement to the 112th Session of the International Organization for Migration Council taking place in Geneva Switzerland through virtual modalities to which we are all gathered to review and evaluate the success and achievements of IOM's cooperation with the International Community at large.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may all know, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the past two years have resulted in alarming and severe impacts towards the daily lives of humans and the socio-economic development system specifically the stability and security of employment and income generation of all workers around the world. For the Lao PDR, the Covid-19 outbreaks within the country has increased the unemployment rate from 9.4% to a staggering 21,8% in which there are a total of 439.082 people who are unemployed and 56.918 migrant workers returning from abroad. Furthermore, there are large numbers of workers in the informal sectors who are highly impacted specifically the groups of migrant workers who have moved from the rural and remote areas to find employment in urban areas nationwide as well as workers engaged in the commercial agriculture production sector. Nevertheless, amidst this situation the Government of the Lao PDR attaches great importance to support and assist workers and businesses that have been impacted by the crisis by introducing policies and measures such as personal income tax exemption and reduction of rates or deferment of tax payments. The Government has also paid contributions to the Social Security Fund in which an amount of 43,930,068,442 Kip or 4,058,955 USD has been paid as benefits to members of the Social Security Fund who are unemployed. In parallel, the Government has also put in efforts to mobilize funding from various sources in order to support impacted workers.

Up to the present moment, the Lao PDR has enhanced and elevated cooperation on labor management with various countries specifically on promoting recruitment and deployment of Lao workers abroad through Government cooperation systems and mechanisms namely cooperation with Japan, South Korea and the Kingdom of Thailand. However, due to Covid-19, there are a large number of Lao migrant workers who are currently returning back home. From 2020 to October 2021, there were a total of 215.671 people which comprises of 84.267 migrant workers working legally through the MOU process of which 77.255 people have already returned to the country. The remaining

139.851 people consists of migrant workers who are working illegally and have traveled through irregular channels. Towards this situation, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has put in its utmost efforts to coordinate with the relevant sectors and cooperated with various international organizations to provide support and assistance to this group of Lao workers, based on the actual capabilities of the Government, in order to ensure that they can return from abroad. Pertaining to this effort, the International Organization for Migration is one of our key partners who have closely and continuously cooperated with the Government to provide support and assistance to Lao migrant workers. The support provided in the last 5 years is valued at 1,259,950 million dollars which has been translated into detailed projects and activities. Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were a total of 16,294 beneficiaries who received support and assistance from this endeavour, 8,865 of who are women.

Distinguished delegates,

Once again, on behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, I would like to express my sincere and utmost gratitude to the International Organization for Migration for your continued and valuable support extended to our country in terms of technical and financial support especially the implementation of IOM's activities to address the Covid-19 impacts. In the future, we hope that we will be able to continue to rely on the support of the IOM in order to implement cooperation projects and activities so as to contribute to the successful implementation of the 9th 5-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the 5-Year Labor and Social Welfare Sectoral Development Plan for the period of 2021-2025 and the National Plan of Action for 2021-2023 specifically the implementation of activities to facilitate the Lao PDR's recovery from the impacts of Covid-19. This will closely rely on the management of change and ensuring policy preparedness in order to promote decent and fair work in the Lao PDR. The country shall emphasize the enhancement of its capabilities for management, support, and assistance for Lao workers and ensure that their rights and benefits are protected especially if there is an outbreak of similar nature in the future. Furthermore, another urgent priority to be timely implemented by the Government of Laos in order to respond to the demands of society is the promotion of skills development for migrant workers to enhance job placement. In parallel, awareness raising on irregular migration for Lao workers is essential in order to ensure that they can travel through regular channels to seek employment opportunities which will in turn enhance the capabilities of labor management and providing assistance in accordance with the laws and regulations.

(Thank You)