

Statement of H.E Prof. Dr BOUNTIEM PHISSAMAY
Minister to the Prime Minister's Office
President of Science Technology and Environment Agency, Laos PDR
To the 12th Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific
(ECO ASIA 2004), Yonago Convention Center,
Tottori, Japan 19-20 June 2004,

Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Lao government to this important congress. Allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the government of Japan for inviting me to attend. I would like to take this opportunity to convey our warmest congratulations to the chairperson and co-chairperson on their respective election. We rest assured that under your guidance, our deliberations will be successful.

Chairperson,

In pursuance of its policy of linking socio-economic development with environment protection, the Lao PDR Government has made efforts to implement its relevant international commitments, particularly the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21. In light of these, a National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy has been adopted. This includes as its main elements, among others, the three cross-cutting issues discussed by the recent Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in March, Jeju, Republic of Korea as well as by the current Commission on Sustainable Development session. This provides a comprehensive policy platform for coordinating all the national, sub-regional, regional and international efforts to address these issues, specially water and sanitation.

Chairperson

Attaching great importance to the management of the natural environment, the Lao government introduced the Environmental Protection Law in 1999. Subsequently in 2000 the Regulation on Environment Impact Assessment was endorsed and in 2001 the Decree on the implementation of the Environmental Protection Law was issued. In 2004 the National Environmental Strategy was introduced and the Environment Education Action Plan was adopted. The government is committed to reversing deforestation in achieving 60 percent forest coverage by 2020. Forests contribute 7-10 percent of the GDP. Our laws, decrees, strategy and action plans incorporate the lessons learned from numerous production, conservation, reforestation, and forestry plantation projects. The government is also fully committed to preserving significant areas of natural forests about 14% of the country's areas to conserve biological diversity and to protect the many regional environmental assets. As signatory to the Kyoto Protocol that is actually ratified by many countries, we seek to implement the Clean Development Mechanism by formulating plan for the Kenaf trees plantation; a species that is recognized as being good to absorb greenhouse gases and has being successfully been planted in Lao PDR.

Lao PDR still finds it difficult to cope with the efforts towards meeting the nationally and internationally agreed targets. This is basically due to financial and human resource constraints. More remains to be done to reach both the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy and Millennium Development Goals targets. So we earnestly appeal to the international community for increased partnership and support. This will assist us greatly in our endeavors to pursue socio-economic development programmes aimed at achieving the goals and targets.

I thank you, Chairperson.