



**Statement by the Head of the Delegation  
From the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic,  
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Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Forestry  
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**Mr. Chairman**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to be here today at this Thirty-Ninth Session of the FAO conference and to take the floor on behalf of the Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic. First of all, let me express my warmest congratulations to **Dr. José Graziano da Silva** for his re-election as the FAO Director-General.

And allow me to take this opportunity to express our Government's appreciation to the UN agencies for their support, and especially to FAO and WFP for the award to Lao PDR for achieving the MDG-1 hunger target of halving the proportion of the population receiving insufficient calories. This is an important recognition from global institutions for Lao PDR, it shows that our country has followed the right development pathway to eradication gradually the problem of hunger and addressing food insecurity in the most sustainable and efficient manner.

Lao PDR recognizes since long the importance of Food and Nutrition Security and that it is essential to the development of the Lao people and people around the world. In this context and in continuation of successful food security programs, the Government of Lao PDR has already determined the food production targets for the Eighth National Social and Economic Development Plan from 2016-2020, and I wish to draw particular attention to the launch of a new strategic framework for Food Production and Nutrition Security and that has been set until years 2025. In parallel to this continued strong national commitment, I am happy to announce that Lao PDR has just joined the Zero Hunger Challenge.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

For the contribution of Lao PDR to the challenge, the government of Lao PDR has embraced a bold and innovative approach to development to build on the successes of recent years in terms of economic growth.

With reference to today's theme, the Eighth National Social and Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) has given a high profile to addressing Food Insecurity and Malnutrition, as part of the Government's commitment to achieving graduation from Least Developed Country Status.

The Eighth National Social and Economic Development Plan is an outcome-based approach which emphasizes collaboration between the government sectors, and aims to create a positive and supportive environment for growth of the private sector.

In order to illustrate to you how the Government plans to address the five elements of the Zero Hunger challenge, I will now make a brief tour of the five elements as described to addressing the zero hunger challenge.

The first element of “**100% or universal access to adequate, nutritious, and affordable food all year round**” is addressed principally in the Agricultural Development Strategy 2025 and the National Nutrition Strategy 2025, although other sector strategies have important elements that relate to food security as I will describe later.

Specifically the goal of sustainable agriculture and food systems is a major feature of the ADS, especially with the focus on commercial producers to develop more economically efficient production that will provide more affordable food;

The National Nutrition Strategy outlines community-based approaches to production of diversified and nutritious food for local consumption, as part of the convergent approach that I will explain shortly.

In addition to these two points, the government has recognized the need to reduce the vulnerability of the agricultural sector to shocks and disasters in order to reduce excessive food price volatility, and has agreed a Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in Agriculture.

The second element of the Challenge of “**Zero stunted children less than 2 years of age**” is a major priority for the Government, and is the primary focus of the National Nutrition Strategy, supported by the three Ministries (Agriculture/Forestry, Education/Sport, and Health) in a convergent approach, with nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.

The goal is to ensure access to nutritious food in the 1000-day window of opportunity between the start of pregnancy and a child’s second birthday.

These will be supported by sustainable nutrition-sensitive interventions for health care, water and sanitation, and education, which will be targeted to women of reproductive age, and children less than five years of age.

In addition these will be further supported by nutrition-specific interventions such as the provision of micronutrients, dietary supplements etc.

The third element of “**sustainable food systems**” is also a priority for the Government under the Agricultural Development Strategy and related strategies.

Standards for sustainability are being established in preparation for the onset of the ASEAN Economic Community, including frameworks of Sanitary and Phytosanitary legislation and a system of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification.

The government is investing in climate-resilient agriculture, including ecosystem-based approaches to agriculture to reduce disaster risks and protect small scale food producers as laid

out under the National Adaptation Plan of Action for Climate Change and the National Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in Agriculture mentioned previously.

The Government is also pursuing cross-sectoral coherence through the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and a specific priority programme in the form of the Food Security and Commodities project to develop collaborative approaches between agriculture, industry/commerce, land and natural resources, energy, transport.

The Government also has specific strategies and programmes that will address the integrated approaches to natural resource management and systems that will conserve and sustainably use agro-biodiversity.

The fourth element of the Challenge of “**increasing smallholder productivity and income**” is also a priority for the government under the 8th NSEDP, and this does not simply mean an increase in production, but instead securing a favourable economic environment for producers to become more effective and efficient.

Some thirteen approaches have been selected by the Government as identified in Agriculture Development Strategy 2025 and the Food Security and Commodities Project, and I can provide some specific examples in the following measures.

Firstly, security of tenure of the land will be strengthened through zoning and land titling, linked to revision of National Land Policy.

Secondly, farmer groups will be fostered and supported to improve bargaining power for purchase of inputs and sale of the agricultural outputs produced.

Then, the availability of rural credit, including microloans, will be improved for small farmers. Value chains will be strengthened, with the aim of creating a more favourable environment for processors, such as mills, and traders, with the aim of giving a fair margin to small producers.

My final example is that agriculture and food-related research, extension and innovation systems will be strengthened to develop and extend more technologies and practices to strengthen and modernize the production sector.

The fifth Zero Hunger Challenge element of “Zero loss or waste of food” is also embraced specifically under the National Food Security and Commodities Project. Measures will be developed and applied for reducing food losses during harvesting, storage, transport, and processing through more efficient systems. The National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action will foster and support interventions to enhance food processing and preservation at household level, which will also reduce losses

The Government of Lao PDR has recognized the value of the comprehensiveness of the ZHC framework, and has agreed to align itself with the ZHC on the basis of its existing policies and programmes as mentioned. Although the Government recognizes that the targets are extremely ambitious, its strategies, plans and actions will constitute the basis on which Lao PDR faces up and achieves the Zero Hunger Challenge.

The Government also recognizes that these strategies and plans cannot be achieved without investment, and it is working with the various groups of stakeholders including development partners and the private sector to bring together the necessary resources to support the development of the necessary programmes and actions

The government has been putting a lot of investment and taking into consideration this challenge, I believe that Lao PDR can address these issues with continued support from its partners in the development and implementation of this framework which links the various policies and strategies to create synergies, especially in relation to the five elements of the ZHC. As a specific example, Lao PDR is participating along with four other countries in FAO's Regional Initiative on the ZHC, which addresses some aspects of the five elements.

## **Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf all of the various sectors of the Government of Lao PDR, and specifically the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, I would like to thank the United Nations agencies for their continued active role in Lao PDR in helping to address food insecurity and malnutrition, now enhanced through my country's participation in the Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenge. I would also like to thank all of the other Development Partners that have so consistently provided their support for this critical area, and will continue to do so. This Government greatly appreciates your commitment to assist the people of Lao PDR.

**“Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention”**