

**Statement by H.E. Saleumxay KOMMASITH**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR**  
**at the ASEM High-Level Policy Dialogue on “ASEM at 25:  
Strengthening Asia-Europe Partnership in a Transforming World”**

**(13:00hrs-18:00hrs) 22 June 2021, Vientiane**

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- At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Vietnam, particularly my friend, Excellency Bui Thanh Son, for the initiative to organize this important virtual meeting today amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEM, which is a milestone to commemorate the accomplishments of ASEM and chart out future direction for advancing the Asia-Europe partnership. Over the past two decades since its inception in 1996, ASEM has evolved and become the unique and significant forum for political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural and education exchange based on principles of mutual respect, equal partnership and win-win cooperation. This has created favorable conditions for Asia and Europe to enhance closer relations and cooperation in various fields. During the past 25 years, ASEM has made significant achievements and tangible outcomes through the implementation of joint projects and activities, and a number cooperation mechanisms have been established to enhance ASEM cooperation.
- Over the past 17 years of its ASEM membership, the Lao PDR has actively engaged and contributed to the ASEM process and cooperative activities. Particularly, the Lao PDR had the honor to successfully host the ASEM-9 back in 2012 under the theme “*Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity*” and other ASEM meetings and activities.

## **Excellencies,**

- While being proud of the success ASEM has achieved thus far, many works remain to be done, admits the rapidly changing and complex regional and international environments particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. All this poses a great challenge for socio-economic development, improvement of well-being of people and maintenance of peace and stability, and prosperity in the world as well as Asia and Europe.

Against this backdrop, I would like to share my views as follows:

1. ASEM should continue to be strengthened and serve as a platform to foster close partnership between Asia and Europe based on the principles of consensus, equal partnership and mutual benefit
2. ASEM should continue to focus on priority areas that reflect shared interests of all ASEM partners while taking into account key opportunities and challenges facing Asia and Europe in a complex and fast changing world, among others, multilateralism, sustainable development, gender equality and the empowerment of women, climate change and connectivity.
3. Asia and Europe should make joint efforts to respond to COVID-19 by conducting joint research, sharing information and best practices, exchanging public health and personnel, and strengthening institutional capacity. ASEM should focus on vaccination rollout program and ensure that vaccines are accessible and affordable for both Asian and European regions. In this regard, the Lao PDR highly appreciate ASEM for their valuable assistance and support extended to developing countries including the Lao PDR, particularly the provision of vaccines through bilateral and multilateral channels such as COVAX and ASEF, and medical supplies and dispatching of medical

experts to assist our efforts in preventing and combating the COVID-19.

4. ASEM should further explore ways and means of cooperation for socio-economic recovery in sustainable, innovative, effective and efficient manners while maintaining uninterrupted supply chains of goods, and medical equipment and vaccines. Asia and Europe should collaborate in areas such as new and advanced technology, science and innovation, digital economy, green economy, tourism industry recovery, natural disaster and climate change, and pandemic prevention and response.

- Last but not least, Lao PDR stands ready to work with ASEM partners and will continue to take active part in ASEM activities to bring tangible outcomes to the people of Asia and Europe. I look forward to the upcoming Summit and the productive deliberation of our meeting today.
- I wish the meeting a great success.

Thank you!