

Speech
by HE Mr. Sommad PHOLSENA
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Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Lao Government and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, please allow me to begin by expressing my heartfelt appreciation to the Minister of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for hosting this very important and meaningful forum. It is my great pleasure and privilege to have an opportunity to speak at this significant meeting to share our developing country's experience with many other advanced countries and international organizations on issues related to environment and energy in transport.

Recently, all over the world concerns about the climate change, global warming and other environmental problems and transport also one of the sectors contributes badly to these problems. While most of us would like to think that we are not part of the global warming problem, the fact remains that if you drive one of the many vehicles on the road, you are contributing to global warming.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We would like to share with you that the current traffic condition in Laos particularly in our capital Vientiane is not so severe compared with other capitals of Asian countries. However, the traffic volume in Vientiane is rapidly increasing as a result of rapid economic growth, and severe traffic congestion is anticipated to occur in the future. Both of the existing public transport and road network in Vientiane are not sufficient to cater the future traffic demand. Therefore, it is an urgent need for the transport master plan to cope with the increased future traffic demand. We were lucky enough to receive generous assistance from Japanese government in formulate a master plan and it has been recently completed.

In our capital Vientiane it was estimated that around 70 percent of the vehicles still use diesel and 30 percent use unleaded gasoline. In general, air quality in the Lao PDR is still considered very good. According to "Environmental Health Country Profile, World Health Organization, 2005", the results of air quality study carried out around Vientiane from March to April 2004 showed that particulate matter levels were high during the period of study and that PM10 levels exceeded the international 24-hour standard most of the days. Sulfur and nitrogen dioxide levels were relatively low. Wind speed was found to be low during the measurement period indicating poor ventilation around the Vientiane area. Pollution is therefore trapped in the areas where they are generated, such as along roadsides where many people are affected.

This good air quality will not last for long because the current importation of fuels and vehicles are not properly controlled. Thus, instead of allow things happen on Business As Usual, I think it is time we should have concrete preventive measures.

In view of the above, the Government of Laos is committed to introduce Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) which is being promoted by the Ministry of Environment of Japan and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD). The EST comprises of 10 thematic areas which includes:

1. Health and Environment;
2. Ambient Air Quality Monitoring and Management;
3. Vehicle Emission Control;
4. Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) of Vehicle;
5. Regulation of Fuel Quality and Standard ;
6. Transport Planning and Travel Demand Management;
7. Environmentally and People Friendly Urban Transport Infrastructure Development;
8. Traffic Noise Monitoring;
9. Information and Public Awareness; and
10. Gender and Transportation

Nevertheless, there is much that is useful in the EST Strategy but in terms of implementation on each thematic area it is rather sophisticated. We therefore would like to call upon international organizations and other advanced countries and to cooperate with Japan assisting Lao PDR and developing countries, in implementing EST. As Japan already initiated namely “**Cool Earth Partnership**” on the scale of US\$10 billion, and extends assistance to developing countries that aims at achieving emissions reductions while compatibly pursuing economic growth, and working to contribute to climate stability. We once again would like to express our sincere thanks to Japan for this significant initiative.

It is my strong belief that the key to tackle global climate change is to establish a low-carbon society. Whether we can hand over the rich basis of living to our future generations depends on our ability to establish such a society where the most efficient utilization of energy and resources, as well as RD&D (research, development and demonstration) of innovative technologies are actually practiced.

Finally, I wish you all the very best in your deliberations and looking forward to the fruitful discussion for the next two days. May I wish the meeting successful. Thank you for your kind attention.