

## Opening Statement

by H.E Mr. Thongsing THAMMAVONG, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR  
at the Opening Ceremony of the 19th Asean Transport Ministers Meeting  
19 December 2014, Pakse, Champasak, the Lao PDR

---

Honorable Delagates,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor, on behalf of the people and Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, to attend the Opening Ceremony of the 19<sup>th</sup> Asean Transport Ministers' Meeting (19<sup>th</sup> ATM) today.

It's a great pride and honor for the Lao PDR, especially for people of Champasak province to host this 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting. Taking this opportunity, I would like to extend my warm welcome to all ASEAN Transport Ministers, ASEAN Transport Vice-Ministers, ASEAN Secretary General, Deputy ASEAN Secretary General and honorable delegates and guests who are gracing us with their presence here at this Meeting.

Honorable Delagates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Geographically located in the hearth of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and ASEAN region, by taking into account all available potentials for socio-economic development, the Lao PDR has set a policy direction aiming at transforming itself from being a landlocked country into landlinked

nation, which can provide transit services in this subregion by 2020. In this connection, ASEAN connectivity has been given a top priority for regional and international integration. In addition, the Lao Government has made transport development a spearhead for national socio-economic development by allocating available resources both from its national budget coupled with assistance given by the friendly countries and international community in developing transport infrastructure, in view of facilitating the movements of people and goods, boosting tourism and investment within our ASEAN region, while enhancing linkages with other regions and the world at large.

Honorable Delegates,

Throughout the past years, the Lao PDR has achieved significant progress in development of transport facilities especially multi-model transport, which includes roads, waterways, airways and railways such as by upgrading the ASEAN Highways passing through the country, airport improvement, among others. Nevertheless, there remain numerous challenges we must continue to overcome, in particular taking into account limited financial resources available compared with the rapidly increased demand in this sector. Moreover, there is a need for continued maintenance of existing infrastructures for ensuring sustainable use, rehabilitation of the damaged roads caused by natural disasters, all this requires an increased amount of funding. Against this backdrop, in order to realize the implementation Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity, our concerted efforts are of great importance in order to effectively address the said common challenges. Currently, the Lao Government has been undertaking appropriate measures for initiating Public Private Partnership

(PPP) for developing and improving transport infrastructures in some local areas, which is considered as another good alternative option.

It is my firm belief that the outcome of this ministerial Meeting will significantly contribute to further promoting and enhancing transport development cooperation, especially ASEAN Connectivity in a smooth, speedy, safe, and modern manner. On this note, it is my great pleasure to commend that, various development partners and key donors are also participating in this ministerial Meeting and will engage in the exchange of views on ways and means to jointly address the current challenges with a view to realizing ASEAN Integration.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish the 19th Asean Transport Ministers' Meeting be crowned with brilliant success. May I also wish all distinguished delegates and guests a very good health, happiness and have a pleasant stay in the Lao PDR.

May I now declare that the 19th ATM officially opened.

Thank you.