

**WELCOME REMARKS BY  
H.E.VIENGSAVATH SIPHANDONE,  
DEPUTY MINISTER, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT (MPWT),  
TO THE OPENING OF THE 21ST SUB-REGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM (STF),  
(LUANGPHABANG, 19-20 JULY 2017)**

- Excellency Vongsavan Thepphachan, Deputy-Governor of Luangphabang province,
- Excellency Math Sounmala, Assistant Minister of Public Works and Transport,
- Excellencies Leaders and Delegates from Lao MPWT and other Line Ministries, ADB, GMS member countries and Dialogue Partners,
- Honorable Lao and Foreign Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sabaidee – Very Good afternoon

On behalf of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT), today I feel very happy and honoured to warmly welcome all delegates, from Laos as well as from abroad, to Lao PDR, and specifically to Luangphabang, the World Heritage City of Laos.

On this auspicious occasion, I also would like to express my warmest welcome to all Heads of Delegation, distinguished delegates from Lao MPWT and other Line Ministries, ADB, GMS countries and Dialogue Partners, to this important Forum. I wish you all a pleasant stay in Luangphabang. Any assistance you may need to make your stay enjoyable, please do not hesitate to let us know.

**Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to note that all ADB, GMS countries and Dialogue Partners are now working hard in improving and developing both hard and soft infrastructures in all sectors, especially transport sector, towards achieving GMS commitment which recognizes that an efficient and integrated transport network in GMS is vital for realizing the full potential of the GMS as well as in enhancing the attractiveness of the GMS region.

We, therefore, ought to make continuous efforts in enhancing our collaborative cooperation in transport sector by implementing the priority programme/projects under GMS which are a major step toward transport integration and connectivity and will pave the way to the realization of our common vision of a well connected GMS.

Towards this end, Lao PDR, located in the center, and the only landlocked country of this sub-region, has always put high priority in fulfilling our commitments in transport cooperation within GMS. We have firmly continued to upgrade and develop our transport infrastructures, with special attention on the routes along the East-West and North-South Economic Corridors, because the Government is of the view that transportation and communication remain to be a very crucial factor and play a leading role in enhancing trade, investment, and tourism; and consequently, accelerating the development of our economy as well as eradicating poverty of the Lao people.

We have adhered to our short and long term plans to be in line with GMS priority projects. In parallel, we have also attached great importance to the software issues in order to facilitate the movement of goods and people between and among GMS countries. I have been informed regularly on the issues of transport facilitation, and in particular on the software issues, which is progressing at a slow pace in comparison with the development of the hardware components. Therefore, I am with the opinion that this STF21 would be a very suitable opportunity to look into those pending issues and to come up with an acceptable solution. With the traditional spirit of GMS / STF cordiality and solidarity toward the Transport development in GMS, I strongly hope that you will have a fruitful and constructive discussion and come up with desired outcomes from the Forum.

**Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing my sincere thanks to our officials from MPWT, Luangphabang province, ADB, GMS, STF and Development Partners who have been working very hard in the preparation for this meeting. Without their effort and contribution, today's meeting would not have been convened successfully.

Finally, I wish you all a strong health, a nice stay in Luangphabang, and great success in the Forum.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.