

Key Note addressed by H.E. Brigadier General Somephone KEOMIXAY,
President of the National Veteran Association of Lao PDR to the 29TH
Executive Board Meeting and 16th General Assembly of VECONAC in Brunei
Darussalam

6-10 October 2016

Dear President,

Distinguished Representatives and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the National Veterans Association of Lao PDR, representing of all Lao veterans, I am grateful and honored to attend the 16th General Assembly of VECONAC held in Brunei Darussalam, land of beauty and stability. The conference is taking place while all ASEAN members are moving forward the first year of the implementation of ASEAN Connectivity of Economic, Culture and Security. The ASEAN Veterans Confederation Countries (VECONAC) contributes consistently to and cooperate more with each other for better benefits of all ASEAN veterans. In this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Ex-Soldiers Association of Brunei Darussalam for hosting the meeting and offering warm hospitality to my delegates.

Excellencies!

In 2016, Laos is honored to be ASEAN Chairman and the host of 28th & 29th ASEAN Summits and related Meetings held between 6-8 last September in Capital of Vientiane in which ASEAN members have adopted many issues for turning vision into reality, especially Lao PDR has ratified convention on Climate Change. Many non-ASEAN leaders paid a visit and attended the said-ASEAN Summits, especially Mr. Ban Ki moon, UN Secretary General and Barack Obama, President of the United States of America and other leaders from dialog partners of ASEAN. For his official visit, US President also paid a courtesy call on the President of Lao PDR and addressed Lao people and media corps. In his speech, Mr. President acknowledged that America runs a secret

war in Laos and recognizes that the war brings about profound impacts on Lao people. During the war, America and Allies dropped over 2 million tons of bombs on Laos which is more than the bombs dropped during the World War II on Germany. The war causes many lives and properties; several soldiers and innocent civilians die, injure, become handicap and many children are orphanage from the war. More seriously, about 30% of the bombs dropped fail to explode becoming major hindrance for the development for our country. Nowadays, unexploded Ordnance posts a dangerous threat to lives and properties of Lao people, hundreds of people are annually victimized by unexploded Ordnance. However, I do believe that under the ASEAN cooperation framework as well as VECONAC framework, we all together will move forward along the ASEAN visions of “Community of harmony, opening up cooperation, living in peace, stability, and prosperity, being partnership for development and community of generosity”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I briefly address the conference: since the 15th VECONAC General Assembly convened on 15 September 2014 in Naypyidaw, Republic of the Union of Myanmar in which we had discussed and agreed on a range of issues. The National Veteran Association of Lao PDR is implementing the joint-agreements in order to protect rights and interests of Lao veterans as well as VECONAC by restructuring its organization at all levels to be effective and workable by pushing the implementing welfare policy for Ex-soldiers who fought against French occupation before 1954, amending welfare policies for ex-soldiers who fought against American invader, handicap veterans, and adjusting policies for families of ex-soldiers who die and injure in battle fields according to the socio-economic growth the country. The association has also been supporting and promoting ex-soldiers to be lecturers for schools, education institutes, and historical battlefield tourist sites. This promotion also educates entire society and creates benefits for veterans. We play attention on supporting and encouraging veterans producing products by raising cattle, goats, livestock and other animals. We empower more women to work for the veteran association, and support the protection and development of women within our organization.

In this auspicious occasion, I recall all old members of VECONAC to continue their support through more activities in ASEAN framework and to create opportunity for us to have lessons exchange with your respective associations specifically lessons on veteran management, welfare policy implementation, veteran assistance and other activities for veterans.

We trust that after the success of 16th VECONAC General Assembly and under new chairmanship of VECONAC chaired by Ex-Soldiers Association of Brunei Darussalam will make VECONAC obtaining new development and more effectiveness.

Last but not least, May I wish representatives and distinguished participants good health, prosperity, and success in your noble tasks.

May the Conference come up with successful outcomes.

Thank You!