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Madam President,

New Zealand welcomes the participation of Lao People’s Democratic Republic in this process.

New Zealand **notes** positively that the death penalty has not been enforced in Lao PDR since 1989 and **recommends** that Lao PDR considers taking further action towards the abolition of the death penalty.

New Zealand **recommends** that Lao PDR undertakes full, independent investigations into all unresolved cases of alleged enforced disappearances, including that of Mr Sombath Somphone.

New Zealand further **recommends** that Lao PDR reviews and amends legislation and practises relating to freedom of expression and assembly to fully enable the function of Non-Government Organisations and civil society.

New Zealand **commends** improvements in the education of girls in Lao PDR and **recommends** further efforts towards addressing disparities in education.

Thank you Madam President.