

Statement by Lao Delegation
Clearance and Risk Reduction Education
8th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
3-5 September 2018, Geneva

Thank you Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Netherlands for its great work as coordinator on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education.

The Lao PDR will continue to serve as a Coordinator on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education for the term 2017-2019. We would like to express our appreciation to Sweden for their announcement to replace the Netherlands. We, therefore, look forward to working closely with you as a coordinator and all States Parties and the international community in this matters.

Lao Government has been doing its utmost to improve its national survey and clearance. In 2017, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR carried out the survey operation in 9 provinces in which more than 1,232 Confirmed Hazard Areas (CHAs) identified covering 19,951 ha. The same year, the sector cleared 3,882 ha and destroyed 108,586 UXO through both CHA clearance and roving tasks.

Throughout 2017, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR had been reviewing, with the support of the United State and UNDP, the initial work in non-technical and technical survey in order to determine the scope of cluster munitions contamination and how to improve the clearance efforts. The sector has determined that expanding the use of the Information Management System for Mine Action to support survey planning and the review of all historical data, electronic and paper, will ensure that the non-technical survey will be followed by a robust technical survey. As a consequence, this process should lessen the number of follow up visits to villages after survey is concluded and provide a sound and reasonable quantification of the contamination in Lao PDR.

In addition, with the support from the international community, new methodologies and technologies were introduced. In this context, the Government of Republic of Korea has provided training for Lao Army Humanitarian Clearance Teams, which are deployed to conduct UXO survey and clearance in UXO contaminated areas across the country. Japan continues to

support UXO Lao and the process of conducting a trail project of the KOMATSU sub-munitions clearance machine.

Mr. President,

Lao PDR has also developed a prioritised planning system for CHA clearances which will be trialled in two provinces this year. Finally, Lao PDR, with support from the United States will commence the national cluster munitions survey next year. The strategy for this survey was developed with support from UNDP and will start in 6 provinces. It is foreseen that after 3 years of survey, Lao PDR can provide an accurate data centric estimation of overall cluster munitions contaminated areas in Laos. As survey quantifies the extent of contamination in Lao, there will be a need to ensure that there is early follow up clearance in priority areas. This will require a significant increase in clearance resources in order for Lao PDR to meet its obligations under Article 4 of the Convention.

Given that so far more than 80,000 ha of CHA has been identified while the clearance capacity in the sector is only 4,500 Ha/year. With this figure the sector has the 18-year clearance work plan. Furthermore, more CHA will be identified once full survey operations to be deployed in 2019.

Nevertheless, with deadline of CCM, Lao PDR may not be able to complete its obligation to clear all contaminated areas under its jurisdiction or control by 2020, therefore, we would like to extend our implementation of the Article 4 of the Convention.

Mr. President,

With regard to Risk Education (RE), despite the good progress of more efficient clearance, we are still experiencing high number of accidents and victims. In 2017, we reported 19 UXO accidents with 41 victims. Those who are the most at risk continue to be boys and men, with the most common cause of accidents being people making fires. A review of the RE approach will be undertaken to complement the US funded survey strategy and the new procedures that this entails. This review will ensure that new interventions take into account age and gender aspects.

Laos has taken steps to increase the effectiveness of Risk Education through the development of a supplementary UXO curriculum for primary schools, and through sport activities and village visits in at-risk areas. Radio messages are regularly broadcasted in coordination with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism in four of the most contaminated provinces.

Mr. President,

Lao PDR has a strong commitment to ensure that the number of victim decreases. People, especially children, who are our future generation should be safe from UXO. Lao PDR would not be able to realise this commitment alone. On behalf of the Lao Government, I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to donors, international organisations and NGOs for their continued assistance and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.