

**Statement by Mr. Anouparb Vongnorkeo,
Director-General, Department of International Organizations,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR
“on Universalization”**

**At 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
3-5 September, 2018, Geneva**

Mr. President,

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I wish to join other delegates in congratulating Mr. Carlos Morales Davila, Charge' d'affaires, a.i. and Deputy Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations Office and other international organizations on your election as President of the Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I wish to assure you our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duty toward a successful conclusion. I would also like to thank Coordinators on Universalization, France and Panama for their excellent work.

Taking this opportunity, I also join other delegations to congratulate Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Namibia which has recently signed and ratified the Convention. This brings the number of States Parties to 104, therefore gradually continuing the progress towards the universalization of the Convention.

Mr. President,

As you are aware that that Explosive Remnants of War and UXOs continue to pose major impact on the livelihood of people and hamper development in all affected countries. During the Indochina War, more than 270 million sub-cluster munitions were dropped on Lao land with as high as 30 percent of them failed to

explode on impact. That is why the explosive remnants of war have posed daunting challenges to socio-economic development and poverty eradication efforts in our country. Unexploded ordnances continue to kill and maim innocent people, especially children in the remote and rural areas. To address this impact, it is way beyond our national capacity as a huge amount of resources is required for clearance activities, raising public awareness campaign and victim assistance. Therefore, continued and increased external support and assistance are crucial.

As one of the most affected countries, Lao PDR has for decades witnessed the painful incidents caused by UXOs. Against this backdrop, the Lao PDR has actively promoted the Convention. Therefore, we urge those countries which have not yet joined the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. President,

Since the entry into force of the CCM, the Lao Government has taken all efforts to promote the Convention at national, regional and international levels. At national level, the Lao Government has continued to strengthen institutional mechanism, raise public awareness on UXO as well as integrating UXO awareness into educational programs at schools. To mark the importance of the Convention, we commemorate the entry into force of the CCM on 1st of August every year.

Since September 2016, the Lao Government launched our national SDG18 entitled 'Lives safe from UXOs', the first localized SDG solely focuses on freeing the country from UXOs. The country continues to bear the brunt of UXO impact as heavy contamination has affected and hampered national development efforts, for instance by limiting the use of land for agriculture, infrastructure development and construction of schools and health dispensaries remain costly and dangerous.

Therefore, to realize the 2030 development agenda, SDG 18 is among our top national priority goals.

At international level, the call for the universalization of the CCM has been conveyed each year by our Head of Delegation to the UN General Assembly. Such message will again be conveyed in this year statement. During the High Level Political Forum held in New York on 17 July this year, the Government of the Lao PDR hosted a side event on Lives Safe from UXO highlighting Lao PDR's efforts in CCM process and further urging universalization of the Convention. This event was a follow up on the event held earlier here in Geneva during the 7th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions last year. These events provided an update on the process of survey and clearance in the country focusing on the timeline for the first national survey and the prioritization system for clearance tasks. In addition, the events also showcased on how the Lao Government, in partnership with development partners, is fulfilling the obligations stated under Article 4 of the CCM and lays a strong foundation for achieving our national SDG 18 by 2030.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the Lao PDR's commitment to continue actively promoting the universalization of the Convention by working closely with all States Parties and international community in order to prevent any further loss of lives caused by UXOs. We commend those countries which have shown their commitments by joining the Convention. On a final note, we once again call upon those countries that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so in the near future.

Thank you Mr. President