

**Statement by Lao PDR
on Victim Assistance
6th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
5-7 September 2016, Geneva**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Australia and Chile for their great work as coordinators on victim assistance and their comprehensive report to the meeting.

As one of the most affected countries, the Lao Government attaches a great importance to the work of victim assistance as well as the implementation of Article 5 of the convention. In this context, the Government approved a new Victim Assistance strategy up to 2020 in order to achieve the goals specified in our national SDG 18, the 8th National Social-Economic Development Plan as well as Article 5 of the Convention.

In addition, almost 8,918 survivor profiles were inserted into the IMSMA database. This information has been used by various NGOs to adequately address individual needs; thereby, ensuring better targeting in Victim Assistance pilot projects. Furthermore, the information is available to Ministries, local and international NGOs, and donor countries. Over time, the survivor Tracking System will provide Lao PDR with an accurate picture of survivor needs and the provision of services which is an essential step in ensuring that the needs of cluster munitions survivors are addressed in compliance with our UXO Sector Strategy “Safe Path Forward II”, SDG 18, National Development Plan and Article 5 of the CCM. The Government of Lao PDR made the decision in 2016 to place responsibility of the UXO Sector at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. This move should ease the mainstreaming of Survivor assistance to the broader disability strategies in Lao PDR and provide synergy in the Sector’s work.

Dear Colleagues,

In 2015 we have provided assistance to more than 750 UXO survivors in many different aspects including: medical, rehabilitation, socio-economic support and support in income generation. Part of the UXO sector’s Five Year Plan is to provide assistance to 1,500 victims.

However, the Lao PDR will still face challenges to address the Victim Assistance needs in the country for the coming years. The first challenge is to improve the coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders, in order to reach the aims of Safe Path Forward II. These include the various government agencies and members of the international community who support disability actions. The move of the Sector to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should help to accelerate this work. The second one is related to resources mobilization. Only few operators and donors consider victim assistance as their main priority. Therefore, the support in this area is extremely limited. The third one is the location of survivors. Most of the survivors and family members of those who have died due to UXO and mine accidents live in rural and remote areas. The difficulties associated with

living in remote areas make access to services and victims tracking very difficult. We are making our effort to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities including thousands of UXO survivors in Lao PDR, but Lao PDR has a long way to go to fully achieve the victim assistance goals within the broader disability and development frameworks. Because of this situation, significant support, not only financial but also technical, are still in need.

Excellencies,

We wish to express our sincere thanks to members of international community for their invaluable support, and hope that they will continue such support and cooperation to assist in our effort to achieve our goals in this important area.

Thank you for your kind attention.