

Statement

by H.E Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR on General Exchange of View at First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 7 September 2015, Dubrovnik , Croatia.

**Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao delegation, I would like to congratulate Her Excellency Mrs. Vesna Pusic, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia on your election as President of the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I am confident that under your able leadership our meeting will be crowned with a great success. I would also like to express my sincere appreciations to the Government and people of Croatia for excellent organization of this meeting as well as for the warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful and historical city of Dubrovnik.

**Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

The Oslo Convention is the outcome of joint efforts made by the international community to put an end to cluster munitions that continue to threaten the lives of innocent civilians, including women and children, hinder economic and social development in many countries across the world. In this connection, the First Meeting of States Parties to Oslo Convention held in the Lao PDR in 2010, adopted the Vientiane Action Plan, which set out clear objectives and actions towards the realization and full implementation of the said Convention.

Over the past 5 years, much progress and achievement has been made to meet the objectives of Vientiane Action Plan. Millions of cluster munitions and sub-munitions have been destroyed, thousand of hectare of land contaminated by cluster munitions have been cleared, the victims have

been given assistance they need in various forms, and awareness about the risk of cluster munitions has been widely raised. These achievements came as a result of consistent efforts, dedication and collaboration of all States signatories, States Parties and supportive States to the Convention as well as international and civil society organizations and stakeholders that committed to making our world free from cluster munitions. On behalf of the Lao Government, I would like to commend all of us for such achievements that we have witnessed today.

Nevertheless, despite the progress and achievements made, the implementation of the Convention in the past five years has also been impeded by many challenges. We have not yet been able to stop the use of cluster munitions in many parts of the world. In addition, a large number of States have not yet acceded to the Convention, especially those that possess or produce cluster munitions, many victims remain unattended and live their lives without proper support. Moreover, technical and technological assistance needed for clearance and survey have not yet met the demand. Therefore, we, States Parties have to redouble our efforts in order to achieve our common goal of making this world free from threats posed by cluster munitions.

Madam President ,
Excellencies,

In the effort to implement Vientiane Action Plan, throughout the last five years, the Lao Government has adopted 10-year National Strategy on addressing UXO problems (Safe path Forward II, 2011-2020) and integrated UXO sector into the National Development Agenda especially the national policy on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication including in the current 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2011-2015). Moreover, addressing UXO impact constitutes a National MDG (MDG9). Just recently, the Government has adopted the National Strategy on Victim Assistance for the period 2016-2020.

In implementing the said national policies and strategies, 33,358 hectares of land has been cleared and 242,056 cluster munitions have been destroyed, among them 2,158 big bombs, 1,141 mines, and 314,407 other UXO items. Medical and rehabilitation assistance has been provided to UXO survivors, among them more than 600 people have been economically and socially reintegrated. Risk education activities have been conducted in 12,591

villages in nine provinces across the country. As a result, the number of the UXO casualties has been steadily reduced from 119 in 2010 to 45 people in 2014. This achievement could not be possible without continued support and assistance provided by the international community and development partners. In this context, on behalf the Lao Government and people, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all States Parties, donor countries, international organizations including the UN agencies and civil society as well as operators for the support and assistance provided both technically and financially to UXO sector in the Lao PDR. We do hope that such support and assistance would continue to be provided helping the Lao PDR to address the daunting challenges posed by UXO, which goes beyond our national capacity due to limited funding, human resources and modern technologies for clearance. This constraint is clearly reflected in the slow progress toward MDG9, which remains off-track, UXO victims and survivors still need adequate assistance, UXO risk education needs to cover all villages and districts where the UXO contamination is high.

In coming years, especially from 2015 to 2020, the Government will continue to mainstream the implementation of the Convention into its national sustainable development agenda especially in the upcoming 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plans (2016-2020). In this connection, some key targets have been set, namely survey and data collection on UXO contaminating in 5,238 villages in 9 provinces of the country, technical survey (evidence based approach) to identify confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) in 124 Government's focal development areas and all villages where people are still living in fear of UXO contaminated areas. In addition, UXO clearance has been one of the top priorities in the Government development and poverty eradication program, UXO risk education will also be included in education curriculum especially for primary and secondary schools aiming at reducing the number of casualties to be lower than 40 people by 2020. Likewise, medical, rehabilitation, employment opportunities will be provided to the UXO survivors for 1,500 people by 2020. In order to achieve the said targets, I would like to request that all States Parties, development partners countries and international organizations continue to render their support and assistance to the Lao PDR in order to realize the implementation of the Convention.

In conclusion Madam President, I would like to reiterate our commitment to the full implementation of the Oslo Convention. I would also

like to express my appreciation to all States Parties in preparing the draft Dubrovnik Political Declaration and Dubrovnik Action Plan that will continue to guide us in the implementation of the Convention in the next five years. I do hope that our Meeting will anonymously adopt the Declaration and Actions that underline strong commitments in making our world free from cluster munitions. On this note, I wish the First Review Conference a very successful outcome.

I thank you.