

**Statement by the delegation of the LAO PDR on Clearance and Risk
Reduction**

Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

September 2012, Oslo, Norway

Mr President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It has been a great pleasure for Lao PDR to work with Ireland in coordinating the Working Group on Clearance and Risk Reduction this past year.

Between 1996 and the end of June 2012, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR cleared a total of 317.02 square kilometres (including 31.57 square kilometres since the beginning of this year). In addition, UXO operators conducted operations that have resulted in the destruction of 571,929 submunitions, including 26,802 submunitions since the beginning of this year. Risk Education sessions were conducted during 489 visits to schools and communities throughout the country.

The current estimate of land contaminated by cluster munitions is approximately 8,470 km². However, the area contaminated by all UXO in Lao PDR could be up to 10 times that amount.

Our current estimate of cluster munitions contamination is based largely on US bombing records which indicate that there were approximately 70,000 individual target locations throughout the country, against which there were often multiple strikes, each with an average 12 Ha spread.

Lao PDR is working on the establishment of a baseline survey, through what we call a District Focused Approach (DFA) that will allow us to develop a more refined strategic plan for future work in Laos, based on

more accurate and detailed data. Three INGOs are currently undertaking trial methodologies of the District Focused Approach in three separate districts. This will subsequently be consolidated into a national methodology and more widely implemented by operators.

This process will take several years, but initial results from 21 districts should be complete by the end of 2013. These results will contribute to a greater clarity concerning how much contaminated land remains and a better ability to plan and prioritise resources, enabling Lao PDR to more efficiently and effectively achieve CCM targets and free our country from UXO. We hope that the estimate of 8,400 km² of cluster munitions contamination will be reduced steadily as the results from the DFA survey come in.

This significant clearance activity throughout the country, combined with on-going risk education activities, has contributed to a steady decrease in casualties. In 2011, a total of 99 victims were recorded – the lowest annual figure recorded since the Indochina war and less than one-third the number of casualties, just a few years ago.

The sector has developed rapidly since our last meeting in Beirut. An additional two international operators, DanChurch Aid and the HALO Trust are in the process of initiating activities in Lao. They complement an existing capacity of 17 organisations (12 commercial, 4 INGO and UXO Lao, the national clearance organisation) that, collectively, field approximately 2,500 national staff – a steadily increasing proportion of whom are female.

Each step brings Lao PDR closer to fulfilling our obligations as a State Party to the CCM and to achieving the MDGs and lifting our country out of poverty.

On behalf of the Lao delegation, I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to donor countries, to international organisations and NGOs for your continued assistance and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.