

Statement by Lao PDR

Victim Assistance

**4th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions**

Lusaka, Zambia

10-13 September 2013

Co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by thanking Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina for their excellent work co-chairing the working group on Victim Assistance and their report back to this meeting.

Throughout the 1964 to 1973 ~~Second~~ Indochina war, Lao PDR suffered intensive aerial bombardment and heavy ground fighting. Records indicate that approximately one ton of ordnance was dropped for every man, woman and child, including more than 270 million cluster sub-munitions, commonly referred to as “bombies” in our country. Because of their wide-area effect and high failure rate, there has been terrible and ongoing impact on our people and our country.

In addition to those killed during the war, there have been more than 20,000 additional UXO casualties since the war ended forty years ago.

There have been 723 reported UXO casualties, almost all from cluster munitions, just in the past 4 years, since this Convention was opened for signature in Oslo. Of these, 303 or 42% were children.

However, progress is being made. The number of new victims has dropped from an average of 300 per year just a few years ago, to 56 this past year. Of course, this is still 56 too many.

In 2013, to date, there have been 27 casualties reported. Of these, 10 were adults: 4 killed, 6 injured; and 17 were children: 6 killed, 11 injured.

Since Lao PDR reported to the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo in 2012, we have undertaken to continue to

implement Phase 2 of the *UXO/Mine Accident and Victim Reporting System* and UXO Survivor Tracking System in 10 contaminated provinces.

We have designated District and Provincial Focal Points to respond to accidents and to the needs of victims throughout the country and are collecting information through the completion of detailed victim and accident surveys. Relevant information is input into the IMSMA database.

By the end of 2013, more than 15,000 UXO Survivors will be tracked through the *Survivor Tracking System*. Data will be collected on the needs of identified UXO/Mine survivors from the 10 heaviest UXO contaminated provinces: Bolikhamxay, Savannakhet, Khammaun, Champasak, Salavan, Sekong, Attapu, Laungprabang, Xiengkhaung and Hauphan province.

Once analysis of Survivor needs is complete, the data will be 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, an essential step in ensuring that the needs of cluster munition survivors are addressed in compliance with our UXO Sector Strategy “Safe Path Forward II”, our MDG9 and Article 5 of this Convention.

Continued coordination of the Victim Assistance Sector has occurred through quarterly meetings of the Technical Working Groups and awareness raising activities were organized during the celebration of the Entry into Force of the CCM. These activities were attended by a large cross section of Government, NGO’s, INGO’s, Victim Representative Organisations and hundreds of others.

To address the challenges of Cluster Munitions Victim Assistance in the context of a broader Disability sector, a comprehensive, inter-ministerial, and inter-sectoral approach is required. We are about to finalize a Victim Assistance Strategy for the National Regulatory Authority which includes a proposal for the NRA to work closely with the National Committee for Disabled People to address the needs of UXO sector victims within this broader context. It is further proposed to assist in the development of a sector wide strategy for the Disabled and UXO survivors.

The NRA Victim Assistance Strategy will address the following 7 pillars;

- Data collection**

- **Medical Care**
- **Physical Rehabilitation**
- **Psycho-social support & Social Inclusion**
- **Economic Rehabilitation and Education**
- **Legislation and policy**
- **Coordination:**

Once the Victim Assistance strategy is adopted, focus will move to coordinating a cross-sectorial, inter-ministerial workshop to identify shared responsibilities for disability, identify resource gaps and develop the framework for an inter-ministerial national disability strategy that is inclusive of victims of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Dear Colleagues, Lao PDR has a long way to go to meeting the needs of victims, in part, because we have so many. Still, we will continue to step up efforts and pledge to continue to improve our work in support of people who have suffered so much from UXO in our country.

Thank you for your attention.