

Statement by Lao PDR

Cooperation and Assistance

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

Lusaka, Zambia,

10-13 September 2013

Thank you Mr. Co-chair,

Lao PDR would like to express our warm appreciation to Mexico and Sweden, Coordinators on Cooperation and Assistance for the excellent report, and also for the Food for Thought Working Paper submitted for consideration at this meeting, which I will comment upon momentarily. We also thank Spain, for its earlier work with Mexico on this important topic.

Dear Colleagues,

As we mentioned in Oslo last year, cooperation and assistance has many forms. On the diplomatic and political level, more than 100 countries, UN Agencies, International Organizations and Civil Society cooperated closely to produce the CCM. We are now cooperating on the universalization of both the Convention and the norms it has established in international humanitarian law.

Although the Convention and its norms are valuable in themselves, real change in the lives of the thousands of people living in contaminated areas, means fully implementing the provisions of the Convention. To do this, affected countries need sufficient resources - human, technical and financial resources. And if a country is severely affected, such as ours, then we need access to such resources over the long term.

We also need effective 'partnership' – partnerships within countries among all key stakeholders including affected communities, local, provincial and national level government officials, political leaders and civil society. And

we need effective international partnership, between affected countries and the broad international community – states and civil society, including the private sector.

The CCM, even in its very short life, has provided a powerful example of effective national and international partnership – partnership that leads to action that is already producing impressive results.

Dear Colleagues,

For Lao PDR, fulfilling our clearance and victim assistance obligations in particular is a long-term, and quite a daunting challenge. Though this work has been undertaken since the second Indochina war ended 40 years ago, and in a systematic way since 1996, we have cleared less than 2% of potentially contaminated areas, and many of the 20,000 UXO survivors do not have their needs adequately met.

In order to accelerate progress in these and other areas of the sector, we are taking a two pronged approach: first, to attempt to significantly increase resources provided and second, to use them more effectively by introducing state of the art equipment and methods to our work.

With respect to resources, let me begin by expressing our deep thanks for the ongoing generosity of international donors, including: Australia, Japan, the USA, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Luxembourg, the EU, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. Last year Lao PDR received approximately USD 30 million from the donor community, and we are profoundly grateful for this.

As many of you know, the Government of Lao seeks to increase the annual budget for the sector to US\$50 million, with increases aimed in particular at survey and clearance, and victim assistance. We are very hopeful that the donor community will maintain and even increase support to help achieve this target.

The Government of Laos is committed to increasing its own direct financial contribution to the sector. In addition, on 19 November 2012, the Minister responsible for the sector issued notification that, from now on, any

development project undertaken in a potentially contaminated area must plan for survey and, where there is evidence of contamination, for clearance, and to build this into the plans and budget for the project. This directive could have very positive impact on the resource situation for the UXO sector over time.

In addition to the 10 Year UXO Sector Strategy approved in 2012, the UXO Sector has just submitted an Action Plan for consideration at the National Round Table between Government and the International Donor Community this November. It identifies the key actions, indicators, expected outcomes and impact in 6 areas of activity in the sector, that we believe will make more efficient and effective use of all resources and achieve greater results.

Our delegation has copies of this Action Plan with us and also of summary project proposals for the consideration of donors, many of whom we hope to meet on the margins of this meeting. We would be particularly grateful for multi-year contributions, in order to plan more effectively.

Lao PDR continues to derive great benefit from the assistance of UNDP in administering the UXO Trust Fund, and in helping us to ensure the highest level of transparency and accountability for donor funds. Some donors prefer bilateral arrangements, and Lao PDR welcomes all manner and mode of support.

We are also grateful to the UNDP, Japan and the US for the technical advisors provided to us as well.

With respect to the excellent Food For Thought Paper submitted by the Co-chairs for this meeting, I wish to convey Lao PDR's strong support for the proposal to create an Online Cooperation Portal for potential recipients of cooperation, and for donors. The descriptors used by the authors of this paper—particularly “low or no-cost” and “simple”, are very attractive to us. It does indeed sound like a creative and relatively easy way to promote greater cooperation and increased support to countries in need.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in addition to the absolute necessity of cooperation and assistance to implement the Convention, we must also appreciate the value of this provision in helping us to universalize the Convention,

particularly affected countries that might fear assuming its legal obligations, without the vital partnership and assistance of others.

We thank the Co-chairs once again and also everyone here for your kind attention.