

Statement
by Mrs. Phavanh Nuanthasing
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At the 5th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions:
General Exchange of Views
02 September 2014, San Jose, Costa Rica

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao delegation, I would like to extend my sincere congratulation to your Excellency Mr. Manuel Antonio Gonzalez Sanz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, on your election as President of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I am confident that under your able leadership, our meeting will be guided to a successful conclusion. I would also like to express our sincere appreciations to the Government and people of Costa Rica for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting as well as for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in this beautiful city of San Jose.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey our deep thanks to Zambia for the successful hosting of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties in Lusaka last year as well as for Zambia's excellent presidency throughout the past year during which an official visit by Zambian delegation was also organized in the Lao PDR to witness the real situation and negative consequences on the ground which continue to pose major threats to people's livelihoods.

On this occasion, my delegation is delighted to gather here with other States Parties and witness the strong support and enhanced partnership of all signatories, UN agencies, international organizations and civil society to take stock on progress and challenges in fulfilling our respective responsibilities under the Convention and to find appropriate measures and seek solutions to the current daunting challenges. This is also an excellent opportunity for us to reaffirm our unwavering collective determination to continue working closely with a view to fulfilling the noble spirit and the objectives of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Toward this end, it is of utmost importance to ensure that a greater number of countries acceding to this Convention. In this regard, to this date there are 113 signatories, among which 84 countries have ratified the Convention. My delegation

would like to congratulate Saint Kitts and Nevis for its recent ratification. Our growing numbers will further stigmatize cluster munitions and to send a strong message to the world community, that cluster munitions should never be used again. Therefore, greater efforts have to be made in order to enhance the universalization of the Convention and harness greater support from the international community to ban cluster munitions and reach the main objectives of the Convention.

Mr. President,

Being one of the most affected countries, the Lao Government has intensified all its efforts to integrate cluster munitions and UXO clearance into the National Socio-Economic Development Plans. In this connection, the Lao Government has made UXO clearance the localized MDG 9 and addressing the impact caused by UXO will determine the extent to which the Lao PDR can obtain all the MDGs targets as UXO clearance is closely linked with national development agenda, especially rural development and poverty eradication. In addition, with our strong determination to meet all obligations under the Convention, the Lao Government has developed national strategy on UXO and the newly revised strategy entitled “The Safe Path Forward II”, will guide the sector towards the year 2020.

Mr. President,

Removing the UXO threat takes time and we must continue to advocate our people especially children to avoid injury until clearance can be carried out. Towards this end, it is necessary to further develop and improve risk education materials and methodologies and seek to expand coverage even beyond contaminated areas to all provinces throughout the country in order to ensure that people are aware of the danger of UXO in every aspect of their daily life.

Victim assistance is another area where the Lao Government has given more attention by approving UXO Victim Assistance Strategy. But still needs to do much more to ensure better service, broader coverage and a more timely response to the full range of needs of survivors physical, psycho-social and economic. Our goal remains their full rehabilitation and reintegration as productive members of their communities.

Mr. President,

To address all challenges and constraints, huge resources including technology and knowhow are required and it is way beyond national capacity. Moreover, UXO Lao, which is one of the main operators, have recently encountered financial difficulty with insufficient resources even to maintain the entire organization and the current workload. To help addressing financial burden, restructuring of the organization is being undertaken by reducing its employees and focus only on core work areas which include evidence based survey and clearance. This unfavorable situation will, to a great extent, affect the implementation of the CCM and achieving national MDG 9. In addition, some funding support to UXO sector provided by some donors has been earmarked with additional conditionality which hinders actual its delivery. Hence, it has made the work become more difficult especially in setting a long-term plan and responding properly to the country's needs. We therefore, encourage the long-term commitments from donors and a more flexible, transparent and sustainable mechanism for ensuring that funding is used in the most effective and appropriate way in order to reach out to most needy and deprived population already living in fear in UXO contaminated areas.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, to express our deep thanks and sincere appreciations to all donor countries and international organizations including the INGOs for the continued support and assistance provided to the Lao PDR in addressing the daunting UXO challenges. We hope that further assistance will be increased given the numerous unfinished tasks which need to be carried out. The Lao PDR reaffirms its strong commitment to continue working closely with all state parties and the international community as a whole in fulfilling the obligations and objectives of the CCM in promoting its universalisation and full implementation.

It is our hope that during this meeting, we will be able to take stock of what has been achieved in the implementation of the Vientiane Action Plan and to identify the measures to further facilitate the implementation of the Convention and to enable all States Parties meet their obligations. I wish our deliberation a great success and I thank you for your kind attention.