

**Statement by Lao PDR**  
**Clearance and Risk Reduction**

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions  
02-05 September 2014, San Jose, Costa Rica

Thank you Mr. Co-chair,  
Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Survey and clearance is very important in Lao PDR, as it is in other countries. I will report on improvements that we have been making to these operations in a few moments.

Before doing so, I wish to report on our general progress in Clearance and Risk Reduction in 2013. The number of UXO victims was down for a 6<sup>th</sup> year in succession from approximately 300 in 2008, to 41 in 2013. This is the lowest annual figure recorded since the Indochina war. The steady decline is in part due to ongoing Risk Education efforts, UXO removal and an increase in the range of safe income generation options which has reduced risk taking behaviour.

However if the current trend of accidents continues this year, then the total number of victims in 2014 may rise. We are currently recording 38 new victims which is more than at this time in 2013. To this end, we continue to develop and improve risk education materials and methodologies to be certain that our people are aware of the danger of UXO no matter where they might move to or travel in the country.

We are stepping up the use of multi-media – especially radio in rural areas, and are working with the Ministry of Education to assist them in considering a risk education curriculum to be used in secondary schools to reinforce the education provided at primary school level. In order to further reduce casualties, and in light of an increasing and increasingly mobile population in Lao PDR, Risk Education needs to expand from 9 provinces to all 14 contaminated provinces and eventually to the whole country.

Currently there is one national operator, UXO Lao, 4 humanitarian survey and clearance operators and 13 commercial companies doing mostly clearance. The total area cleared of UXO in 2013 was 6,927 ha, up from 6,040 in 2012, and in that process 82,238 UXO were removed, 40,000 of them being cluster munitions. We expect that our teams will be destroying more than another 2,000 UXO this week while we are here in Costa Rica.

While we are very happy with these results, we would of course always like to do even more. With the support of sector partners, National Regulatory Authority have developed a process of evidenced based survey for cluster munitions which enables us to rapidly locate and define areas of cluster munition contamination. This approach is expected to result in an increase in the amount of UXO removed and enable effective identification of priorities for our clearance assets. UXO Lao, the largest operator, is currently restructuring to take forward these concepts.

In addition to a focus on survey and confirmation of contamination, we strive to bring more resources and technology to assist us. We are undergoing a programme of upgrading old equipment within UXO Lao, and are actively engaged in testing and trials of a variety of instruments and machines, including detectors, data loggers, and vegetation removal systems.

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

Thank you for your kind attention.