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Statement by Lao PDR
Victim Assistance
5th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
San Jose, Costa Rica
02-05 September 2014

Co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by thanking Afghanistan and Mexico for their excellent work as coordinators of the working group on Victim Assistance.

Throughout the 1964 to 1973 Indochina war, Lao PDR suffered intensive aerial bombardment and heavy ground fighting. There have been more than **20,000** UXO casualties since the war ended more than forty years ago.

The vast majority of accidents that occur today are from the remaining sub-surface contamination and usually happen when people in rural areas are making a fire or digging or otherwise striking the ground.

As reported in our **general statement**, in recent years we have made great progress in reducing the number of new victims, from an average of 300 annually in 2008, to 41 in 2013.

However, we still have a long way to go to provide support to survivors and their families.

In 2014, to 20th August, there have been 38 casualties reported from 15 accidents. Of these, 13 were adults: 4 killed, 9 injured; and 26 were children: 10 killed, 16 injured. The main causes of such these accidents include setting fires, playing and vegetation cutting.

Beyond meeting their immediate emergency medical needs, very few survivors receive adequate physical, psychological or economic support to help them reintegrate into their communities.

Over the past two years we have been gathering data on victims and have recently entered the profiles of 9,000 into the IMSMA data base in order to record their individual needs and to begin to systematically track their progress. This information is 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 recent celebration of the Entry into Force of the CCM. In

additional, two week ago, we organized a Charity Golf event to raise funds to support UXO survivors. These activities were attended by a large cross section of Government, UXO operators both humanitarian and commercial and other private sector enterprises.

To address the challenges of Cluster Munitions Victim Assistance in the context of a broader Disability sector, a comprehensive, inter-ministerial leading committee has been established under the supervision of a deputy Prime Minister and under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and their existing National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People (NCDE)

On the 14th February of this year, the Government approved a UXO Victim Assistance Strategy for the National Regulatory Authority which authorizes the NRA to support the National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People (NCDE) to:

- (i) Develop a sector-wide strategy for the disabled including UXO survivors;
- (ii) Cooperate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to ensure adequate vocational and other training is provided, and
- (iii) Cooperate with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the physical and psychological needs of victims are more adequately met.

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 pledge to continue to improve our work in support of people who have suffered so much from UXO in our country and we hope that you can help us in this sometimes under supported area of need.

Thank you for your kind attention.