

**Statement by the Delegation of the LAO PDR: National Implementation
Measures**

Inter-sessional Meeting to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Geneva, Switzerland, April 16-18, 2013

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lao PDR was very pleased to be the second country to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, after Norway, to whom we are deeply grateful for initiating the Oslo Process that led to this Convention.

We continue to be mindful of the strong commitment that required by our country and by the international community in order to meet the many obligations contained in the Convention. I wish to assure distinguished colleagues that we remain fully committed to all the provisions of this Convention and to take this opportunity to report on some of the national measures we have taken towards its implementation and our plans for the future.

As we reported at the 3rd MSP in Oslo, our new 10-year strategy for the UXO Sector, entitled *The Safe Path Forward II*, will guide work in the UXO Sector through to 2020. It is aligned with the most recent 5-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan and will bring together humanitarian and national development priorities for the UXO sector to a far greater extent than in the past.

It will advance progress toward our Millennium Development Goal 9, which our Government developed specifically for the UXO sector, and to contribute to the realization of the other MDGs. It will also help Lao PDR to reduce

poverty and to meet another major national aspiration, namely to graduate from the list of Least Developed Countries by 2020.

We are in the final stages of piloting a District Focused Approach, in which three very capable international operators, Handicap International, Norwegian Peoples Aid and Mines Advisory Group tested different methodologies to non-technical and technical survey. The results will be analyzed and the best elements of each will be incorporated into a standard survey methodology which will be used throughout our country. We hope this will help us get a much more accurate picture of the nature and full extent of the UXO contamination problem in Lao, enabling us to more efficiently and effectively target survey and clearance efforts.

In the past 6 months, the NRA has convened three Regional Planning Meetings in the north, central and southern regions of the country in order to brief provincial officials and operators on the new 10 year Sector Strategy and to initiate a comprehensive planning process which will lead to the development of a multi-year workplan for the whole Sector. This workplan will reflect both Provincial and national priorities – specifically approximately 300 development focus areas. These meetings were chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. This comprehensive planning and prioritization process clearly has the full support and engagement of senior levels of government.

Over time, there will be a redeployment of survey and clearance assets to ensure that these development focus areas are addressed as a matter of priority, while continuing to prioritize areas of high risk and extreme poverty.

Lao PDR has put in place a Survivor Tracking System in order to gather detailed information on the injuries of victims, to direct them to appropriate service providers and to track their progress. Eventually we hope to complement this with a systematic victim survey.

The Technical Working Group on Victim Assistance continues to meet on a regular basis. We have also drafted the first ever Victim Assistance Strategy for the NRA, which will be submitted to the NRA Board for approval at the next meeting of the Board within a month or two.

With the assistance of the UNDP, we will conduct a comprehensive institutional capacity assessment of the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) and will take any necessary measures to ensure that we continue to be able to oversee and ensure the performance of national and a growing number of international operators in all three main areas of activity - clearance, risk education and victim assistance. UXO Lao, our national operator, will also undertake a similar capacity assessment.

To further increase national capacity, the Lao Government has directed the Lao army to develop a capacity in humanitarian mine action and to work to national standards which have been established for the UXO sector and under NRA oversight when engaged in these activities. Fifteen army personnel have already been trained and we have developed a project proposal that envisages an additional 36 trained this year and 48 per year in the subsequent 4 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year the UXO sector in Lao PDR effectively utilized \$31M and we believe that we can scale activities upward and responsibly absorb \$50M per year. We hope that the international community, to whom we are most grateful, will help in this regard.

The Government of Lao PDR intends to increase its own financial investment in the UXO sector and, in November 2012, also issued a directive – announcement number 93, issued by the Minister responsible for the UXO sector - that any development project to be undertaken in suspected contaminated areas must include survey and, if there is evidence of contamination, of clearance into their plans and budgets. The impact of this directive on the pace of operations and additional resources generated, could be quite profound as it is implemented over time.

At the policy and legal level, though a full State Party, Lao PDR has yet to put in place legislation that will impose legal sanctions to prevent and suppress activities prohibited to a State Party, undertaken by persons or on territory under our jurisdiction or control, as required by Article 9 of the Convention. I wish to confirm that it is Lao PDRs intention to establish a law or laws that

will adequately and fully reflect the high standards achieved in this Convention and we urge all States Parties to do the same.

In order to achieve greater coherence in the governance of the Sector, UXO Lao, our national operator, has recently been moved from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to the Leading Committee for Poverty Eradication and Rural Development, reporting to the Minister of the Prime Minister's office who is also the Chairman of the NRA Board.

Lao PDR will continue to do its best to implement all the provisions of the Convention and look forward to the day when our nation is free of the threat of cluster munitions and other UXO.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.