

Statement by Mrs, Phavanh NUANTHASING,

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General Exchange and National Implementation Measures

CCM Inter-sessional Meeting

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Mr. Co-chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking Zambia as President of the 4th MSP for the excellent arrangement for this meeting and for the work done since our Meeting in Zambia last September as well as for the visit to Lao PDR in March this year, where the delegation saw first-hand, cluster munitions and other UXO that still threaten our people and deny safe access to our land, half a century after the first ones were dropped and also saw some of our efforts to free our country of this deadly legacy.

I wish also thank Costa Rica and the Netherlands for their work in chairing the Working Group on General Status and Operations of the Convention and New Zealand as chair of the Working Group on National Implementation Measures, as my remarks will address both these areas.

It is with great pleasure that we gather here - 113 signatory countries to the CCM, 84 of which are State Parties, with UN agencies, international organizations and civil society to collectively assess our progress in universalizing and implementing the Convention.

For today, I wish to briefly update you on the situation in Lao PDR with respect to the UXO sector and our delegation will go into greater detail in the individual working sessions this week.

Victim Assistance

I begin with the very good news that the number of victims has declined for a 6th year from around 300 per year to 2008 to 41 in 2013.

While we work to reduce this number further, we must also meet the needs of the estimated 20,000 UXO survivors who receive short term medical assistance but still not enough support and services for proper rehabilitation and economic reintegration.

To help address this situation, the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) recently approved a new Victim Assistance Strategy which, among other things, mandates the NRA will seek to support the National Committee on the Disabled and Elderly (NCDE) to:

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

Risk Education

The significant reduction in the number of UXO victims is partly due to ongoing risk education activities. However, we wish to further expand our work to provide risk education in all 17 provinces of Lao PDR, from the current 10 provinces; and offer risk education in secondary school, as well as primary school.

Survey and Clearance

In the area of Survey and Clearance, progress has been slow but steady. As you know, our Government has established a target of 20,000 hectares per year and we are currently releasing an average of 6,000 hectares, almost all on the basis of full clearance.

However, on 24 March, the NRA Board granted provisional for pilot project on survey that will be outlined later today in the working group on Clearance and Risk Reduction.

The most important feature of the new approach is that Lao PDR will begin to systematically certify and hand-over land for use, on the basis of survey alone, where there is no evidence of contamination. This should significantly increase the amount of land released each year.

We will also dedicate more assets for survey and give priority to 64 areas that have been identified as Focal Development Areas and 167 rural areas identified for stabilization of settlements and secure livelihoods.

Finally, we are continuing to test different technologies and methodologies for both Survey and Clearance, with the intention of significantly increasing productivity over time.

Co-ordination and Regulation of the Sector

NRA continues work on the first UXO Sector multi-year workplan, which will be supplemented by more detailed annual work-plans for the Sector.

Developing a Sustainable national capacity

In addition, NRA and UXO Lao, with support from UNDP, will carry out comprehensive institutional capacity self- assessments to determine where our respective capacities need to be further strengthened to meet our objectives.

In order to further develop a strong and sustainable national capacity in the UXO Sector, we hope to further develop the capacity of the Lao Army to undertake survey and clearance to national standards and under NRA oversight, when engaged in humanitarian work in the UXO sector..

Resource Mobilization

In 2012, Government directed that all development projects to be undertaken in suspected contaminated areas, must plan for survey and clearance as necessary, and build the cost into their budgets. This requirement could have

significant impact on the level of resources directed to the sector in future years.

For the first time, we have calculated the Government contribution to the sector, in kind, and are pleased to report that it was almost US\$5M in 2013, and the total for the sector, including commercial contracts let by private sector, was \$46M.

It is our hope as well that, as we adopt new and better methodologies and technologies and continue to demonstrate the efficient and effective use of resources, that donors may help us further increase the annual budget for the UXO sector, both to reduce risk and to help us to meet MDG 9 and graduate from LDC status by 2020.

Meeting International Treaty Obligations

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, although Lao PDR has ratified the CCM, and has consistently met our Article 7 reporting obligations, we must also establish national legislation that contains legal prohibition for the commission of prohibited acts under the Convention.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, and in consultation with the concern agencies we will commence the development of national legislation that covers our remaining legislative obligations under the Convention.

I thank you for your kind attention.