

Opening Remarks

Working Group on Clearance and Risk Reduction

7 April 2014, Geneva

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and welcome to the meeting of the Working Group on Clearance and Risk Reduction of the Intersessional Meeting in 2014. My name is Maythong Thammavongsa, and I am Deputy Director General of the International Organisations unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR. It is a great pleasure to co-chair this meeting with my colleague François Garraux from the Permanent Mission of Switzerland. As you are aware, Lao PDR and Switzerland have been joint Coordinators on Clearance and Risk Reduction since the Fourth Meeting of States Parties in Lusaka in September 2013.

Let me first briefly recall the provisions of the Convention relevant to clearance, in Article 4. As I am sure you are all aware, under this provision, States Parties undertake to clear and destroy or ensure the clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants in contaminated areas under their jurisdiction or control. As a major contribution to assist States in achieving our common goal and a demonstration of our shared determination to “put an end to all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munition remnants”, at the First Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane in 2010, States Parties adopted the Vientiane Action Plan.

In Action 15 of the Vientiane Action Plan, States Parties are encouraged to share best practices and lessons learnt. The Meetings of States Parties and Inter-sessional Meetings provide excellent opportunities for States, operators and our partners in civil society to share experiences and insights gained in survey and clearance operations.

At the Meeting of States Parties in Beirut in 2011, States Parties warmly welcomed a paper by Australia, as Friend of the Chair on Clearance and Risk Reduction, on the application of all available methods for the efficient implementation of Article 4 of the Convention.

At the Meeting of States Parties in Lusaka in 2013, Ireland and Lao PDR presented a paper on “effective steps for the clearance of Cluster Munition Remnants” which suggested that cluster munition contamination can be addressed effectively and relatively quickly, if available resources are targeted appropriately, and by adopting a systematic step-by-step approach to the challenges presented by such contamination. At the same meeting in Lusaka, Norway also presented a working paper on compliance with Article 4 that highlighted that efforts to accurately identify

and delineate contaminated areas have sometimes proven to be more challenging than the actual clearance operation.

Against this backdrop, the coordinators for clearance and risk reduction would like to propose that our discussions during this inter-sessional meeting should focus on **Best Practices for Surveys under the CCM**, given that survey methodology is of vital importance in the detection of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

We would most welcome the views and perspectives of affected States, relevant International Organisations and civil society as well as donor States and would propose that delegations address the following questions:

- What has been your experience with surveys to detect explosive remnants, in a cluster munitions contaminated environment in particular?
- What worked well, and what could be improved?
- What are the relative resource requirements of different methodologies (financial and non-financial)?
- What survey methodologies have produced the most accurate and comprehensive result and, in your views, are best suited to address remaining challenges to clear and destroy, or ensure the clearance and destruction of, cluster munition remnants located in cluster munition contaminated areas under the jurisdiction or control of each State party?

Dear colleagues,

To begin our session, I would like to welcome our panellists and I now would like to hand over the microphone to my co-chair François Garraux to introduce our speakers and run the meeting.

Thank you.