

**Statement by Ms. Moukdavanh SISOULITH,
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At the Convention on Cluster Munitions Intersessional Meetings 2022
16 – 17 May 2022**

Agenda item: Clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk education – updates & presentation of the extension requests under Article 4.

Mr. President,

Distinguish delegates,

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to commend Switzerland for their able presidency and tireless effort in advancing the CCM works during the unprecedented global pandemic period. And I would like also to congratulate you, Ambassador Aidan LIDDLE (United Kingdom), on your election as the president the 10th Meeting of States Parties and assure you our full support for your Presidency.

Mr. President,

During the 9th Meeting of States Parties, the Lao PDR was granted a five-year Extension under Article 4 of the CCM for the period of 2020 – 2025. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to report briefly the progress of our implementation and also highlight some key challenges we have faced thus far.

In accordance with international standard, from 2014 onward, the Government of Lao PDR has deployed an evidence-based approach to cluster

munitions survey and clearance. In parallel with the Annual UXO Sector Prioritization Plan which has based on two sources of data namely the Confirm Hazardous Areas (CHA) and the community development projects such as school and hospital building and other community development activities.

In term of survey and clearance, from 2020 to 2022, the total CHA area is about 152,279 Hectares, and 21,006 Hectares of land were cleared by all humanitarian clearance operators, there were more than 383,810 UXO found and destroyed, of which 298,766 were cluster munitions, 654 big bombs, 184 landmines and 84,206 other type of UXO.

Apart from conducting survey and clearance, the risk reduction education and awareness raising activities have been carried out regularly through multiple channels such as: in-person door to door visits, education curriculum integration and hotline establishment. Despite all the efforts in risk reduction sector, the number of accidents occurred in the past 3 year's shows an increasing trend. There were 20 accidents in 2019, 23 in 2020 and 33 in 2021. In line with national victim assistance action plan, the support activities also have been mobilized in a timely manner; this includes medical treatments to all survivors physically and psychologically, vocational training and economic supports for the victims and their families.

Mr. President,

Base on the current financial resource and capacities at approximately 30 million US Dollars per year to support 108 operating teams and clearing of 5,000 Hectare each year. It is likely that we will not meet our projection of clearing all CHA by 2025 under Article 4 due to the challenges as follows:

1. Firstly, the magnitude of cluster munitions contamination combine with the mountainous geographical landscape of the Lao PDR is the key factor that making the Cluster Munitions survey and clearance more complex and time consuming.
2. Second, it is undeniable that we have faced funding shortage and sometimes reaches a critical point where there is inadequate fund to maintain the regular operational teams. Therefore, having sufficient resources both human capacity and financial resources are essential for survey and clearance as well as to fully achieving the Extension Work Plan.
3. Third, to maintain the well-technical and skillful operators in order to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the clearance remains a challenge. This requires sustainable capacity building programs which knowledge transfer can be passed on from each generation in a continuous manner.

Mr. President,

During the Article 4 Extension period, the work plan will feature six main activities in the 9 most contaminated provinces namely:

1. To conduct Non-Technical Survey in 2,776 villages;
2. To conduct Technical Survey for identified CHA of 250,000 Hectares;
3. To conduct clearance of 50,000 Hectares;
4. To provide victim assistances for 5,750 UXO survivor and their families;
5. To conduct MRE in nine high cluster munitions contamination;
6. To provide capacity building for Lao's People Army humanitarian team.

In conclusion, the Lao PDR is open for exchange best practices and welcome all relevant recommendations and we will continue to working closely with international communities to address these challenges and obstacles in order to make sure all land are cleared from cluster munitions contamination as well as to achieve our national Sustainable Development Goal entitled SDG 18 “Lives save from UXO”.

I thank you.