

Comments on Lao PDR's extension request
9th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
2-4 September 2019



Thank you, Mr. President.

We thank Lao PDR for preparing this request and the Committee for its work of following-up with Lao PDR.

The clearance program in Lao PDR faces formidable challenges, among other, the inflated estimates of contamination from the early days of the program, and clearance activities based on requests from land users.

It was well-known from the inception of the Convention on Cluster Munitions that Lao PDR would require more than ten years to complete clearance. Despite that, Lao PDR courageously joined the Convention instead of using contamination as an excuse not to join. Lao PDR must be supported and encouraged, because the success of clearance in the country will be a proof of collective success under the Convention. This will be the case with any request submitted by any country in the future.

Among the positive points of Lao PDR's extension request, we note the following:

- Figures are clear and consistent throughout the document;
- The request shows crucial improvements in the land release methodology applied nation-wide, and it rightfully focuses on survey;
- The programme is no longer based on answering calls from land users, but is rather focused on systematic survey and the clearance of entire strikes.

Among the points that will require clarifications and further efforts in the coming months and years, we note the following:

- The request lacks a work plan for clearance that specifies “who will work where, and when”. This is an essential requirement of any extension request.

Because there has been no intersessional meeting, States Parties have not had the opportunity to express this expectation publicly vis-à-vis Lao PDR. So, we end up at the Meeting of States Parties, confronted with an extension request that has no proper work plan. You, the States Parties, are about to grant five extra years to Lao PDR without knowing how clearance activities will unfold during that period.

- The resource mobilization plan is thin and will need to be fleshed out;
- There is an estimation of outputs that is “based on existing resources”, and those resources are estimated to be about 21 million US dollars per year. But our understanding is that Lao PDR received over 37 million US dollars in 2017. Some clarification on the 21-million-dollar estimate would be helpful.

In closing, Mr. President -- The strength of the process for extension requests is a responsibility of all States Parties. As this is the first year for extension requests under this Convention, there is a lot of space for improving the process and the content of requests. We trust that this will be taken seriously by all States Parties.

Thank you.