

**Statement by the Delegation of the Lao PDR**  
**At the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster**  
**Munitions**

**11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023,**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**

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**Topic: Clearance and Risk Reduction Education**

**Mr. President,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My delegation would like to express our appreciation to Guyana Norway, the coordinators on Clearance and Risk Reduction Education, for their excellent work in undertaking this important role.

In 2023, Lao PDR has continued to implement the Cluster Munition Remnant Survey methodology to identify Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs), and in turn defining the full extent of UXO and cluster munitions contamination in Lao PDR. The sector has conducted Non-Technical Survey in 77 villages, Technical Survey in 178 villages, established 12,323 Hectares of CHAs, and 3,188 hectares of land cleared, of which the majority was for agriculture, with over 202 Hectares cleared for development infrastructure. Survey and clearance has been undertaken by various operators in the country, notably UXO Lao, Lao People's Army humanitarian clearance Unit 58, Mine Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Halo Trust and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) and commercial operators.

Due to the fact that, the Lao PDR has limited resources and little visibility on external ODA funding to be able to tackle this gigantic problem. We have been granted approval for the extension request under Article 4 in 2019. On this note, I would like to provide a brief update on our achievement during the extension period for the past 4 years, the Non-technical survey (NTS) have been conducted in 1, 312 villages and Technical Survey (TS) in 1,613 villages resulting in Confirmed Hazardous Area (CHA) of over 74,800 Hectares, of these, over 18,500 Hectare were cleared from cluster munition remnant, which equivalent to 25 percent of CHA clearance and 305,319 UXO items were destroyed. Notably, funding received during the extension period was about 127 million US Dollars. This achievement has been made possible by the close cooperation between the Government of the Lao PDR and development partners including donor countries and international organizations. The Lao PDR is immensely grateful to supporters for contributions to assist in this enormous task. Lao PDR continues to do everything in its power to undertake clearance, however the massive extent of contamination in the country is the most significant factor in limiting progress at a national level. Further funding is also required to increase human resources for team expansion, and the government is keen to explore innovation and new technologies to hasten clearance outcomes. Therefore, we are in the process of preparing to submit the second Extension Request under Article 4.

**Mr. President,**

The NRA with UNDP support conducted a post-clearance impact assessment in 2022 which determined that clearance makes the most impact when supporting rural socio-economic development initiatives and livelihood improvement and generating income from land used.

In order to increase progress in pursuit of strategic objectives in the sector, the government of Lao PDR has worked to increase the operational capacity of Unit 58, the humanitarian clearance arm of the Lao People's Army. With support from UNDP and the government of Republic of Korea, Unit 58 has expanded capacity in survey, clearance and risk education in areas not covered by other operators.

To strengthen efficiencies in survey and clearance work, the NRA have been working with stakeholders to improve our IMSMA National Database and we continue to strengthen its utility in collaboration with all operators in the country. For the RRE, we have also strengthened our efforts in expanding and improving Explosive Ordnance Risk Education activities by updating the content of the advocacy material, and ensuring materials are focused towards behavior change for specific at-risk groups. UXO radio programmes continue to be broadcasted in the most impacted provinces and messages are being communicated in several local languages reaching multi-ethnic communities across the country.

However, the sector still faces challenges with casualties. Over 2022, there were 20 casualties and in 2023, there were 26 casualties in the six months of this year. In order to continue risk education activities and to improve the effectiveness of interventions, a Knowledge Attitude and

Practice survey was conducted to better understand the gaps in achieving behavior change with targeted at-risk groups.

**Mr. President,**

Lao PDR will continue to work closely with international organizations and development partners in order to overcome challenges and obstacles. Currently, Lao PDR is formulating a risk education framework to ensure that UXO education reaches the most remote areas, that aims to upgrade education materials and plans the expansion of the broadcasting radio programmes towards nationwide coverage.

The achievements highlighted above would not have been made possible without the support from our development partners, donors and international organizations working in the sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and we look forward to the future cooperation in order to achieve not only our National goals and objectives but also for CCM obligations.

**Thank you**