



**Statement by H.E Phoxay KHAYKHAMPHITHOUNE,  
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR  
At the 11th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions,  
11-14 September 2023, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Item 8: General Exchange of View**

**Mr. President,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates**

On behalf of the Lao PDR's delegation, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to you, Ambassador and the Secretariat for your tireless effort in the preparation of this annual Meeting of States Parties.

**Mr. President,**

The Lao PDR always attaches great importance to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, our commitment to the principles and aims of the CCM remains unwavering. As the world most affected country, Lao PDR has witnessed firsthand harmful impacts of these inhuman weapons that still continue to kill and maim our people. Despite the conflict ended 40 years ago, the remnants of cluster munitions continue to pose a deadly threat, not only to our people but also to our national socio-economic development.

With an estimated eighty million (80) cluster sub-munitions remain unexploded, land contamination with cluster munitions extended over eight thousand square kilometers (8,470 Km<sup>2</sup>) covering one third of the country total area. Although there are vast majority of land needed clearance, with the consistent support from international organizations, friendly countries and NGOs, over eighty thousand hectares (82,853 Ha) was cleared as of today. As a result, the safety of our citizen and their livelihoods have been improved constantly.

Notably, the clearance of UXO has enabled the construction of the country's first high-speed railway, a landmark development project. This railway will significantly enhance the quality of life for our people and boost socio-economic development, transforming from a landlocked country to a landlinked one.

Despite the remarkable progress we have demonstrated across the country, the deadly remnants of cluster munitions still pose a threat to our civilians, with accidents occurring annually. Over the past decade, these remnants have tragically claimed and injured 25 to 60 lives per year, with the majority of victims being our children and people living in rural area. Thus, our mission to clear these remnants is not just an economic necessity, but a moral imperative.

### **Distinguished delegates,**

As we gather here today, we must remember the primary objective of the CCM is to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions through a prohibition and a framework for action. However, we are acutely aware that the path to universalization and effective implementation is complex and still face with a number of challenges. The clearance of cluster munition remnants is a monumental task, requiring considerable resources, technical expertise, and time. The provision of assistance to victims, including their medical care, rehabilitation, and social and economic inclusion, is equally critical and demanding.

Therefore, we urge the international community to bolster its commitment and cooperation in the face of these profound challenges. We must collectively mobilize the necessary political will, financial resources, and technical capacities. Importantly, we must foster partnerships, share knowledge and best practices, and provide mutual support. International cooperation and assistance are not just enshrined in the Convention; they are crucial to its successful realization.

## **Excellencies,**

On this occasion, I would like to take this moment to announce that our National Steering Committee is now undergoing restructuring for a more effective implementation process. In this regard, the Government of the Lao PDR has decided to transfer the work of the National Steering Committee on Addressing UXO Issues and the Office of National Regulatory Authority (NRA) from the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, effective from 04<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

This change signifies the continued commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Upholding the mandate of the CCM remains a national priority, and this reshuffling underlines the gravity of UXO issues in our national agenda. By placing the committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we are emphasizing our commitment to international cooperation and diplomatic engagement in addressing these serious challenges.

In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering support for the CCM and we dedicate to making our nation safer by continuing to address and mitigate the impact of UXO. We also affirm that the eradication of cluster munitions is not only a matter of disarmament and non-proliferation, but also a prerequisite for sustainable development, peace, and security.

We stand ready to work hand in hand with all States Parties, and those yet to join and related international organizations, to realize our shared vision of a world free from cluster munitions.

**Thank you.**