

**Statement by Italy on behalf of the Analysis Group for
Article 4 Extension Request by Lao PDR**

Madam President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Article 4 Analysis Group on the extension request by Lao PDR. The current members of the Analysis Group are the Coordinators for Article 4, Italy and Norway, and the Coordinators for International Cooperation and Assistance, Lebanon and Switzerland. We want to express our gratitude to the ISU and the following organisations that contributed to the work of the Analysis Group: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Mine Action Review, and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

Madam President,

On 20 June 2023, during the 26th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN26), Lao PDR notified the CCM Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of its intention to submit a second request for extension of its Article 4 deadline which was submitted for an initial assessment by the ISU on 15 November of the same year. At the beginning of this year, Lao PDR submitted an official request for a five-year extension up to 1 August 2030. Such a request was ultimately updated on 17 May 2024 following a meeting of the Analysis Group with the national delegation of Lao DPR at the 27th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN27).

The extension request highlights that Lao PDR has the world's highest level of contamination by unexploded submunitions. The request clarifies that, despite significant financial investment and progress in clearance, the size of the task of clearance remains massive. Further requests will follow the second extension period due to the important extent of contamination and expected clearance rates. The request makes clear that determining the extent of cluster munition remnant contamination in Lao PDR is an on-going process through survey.

The request informs that, since its first extension request (2021-2023), Lao PDR has implemented a Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) methodology to identify Confirmed Hazardous Areas

(CHAs). The request further specifies that CMRS of villages has been undertaken systematically in 6 of the most contaminated provinces in the Lao PDR, and that proactive survey has now been completed in 5 of these 6 provinces. Clearance of CHAs is recognised as the most effective evidence-based approach. The government will also review alternative methods to improve efficiency in clearance during the requested extension period as and when they present themselves. The analysis group welcomes the inclusion of a concrete 5-year work plan in the extension request, which includes both plans for clearance, and for survey to identify and confirm cluster munition remnant contamination.

The request informs that Lao PDR would prioritize unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance in high contaminated, densely populated areas, focusing on the poorest districts and aiming to enable rural development projects necessary for schools, clinics, and infrastructure. The government of Lao PDR has contributed to the UXO sector by funding various initiatives, including support for the humanitarian clearance teams of the Lao People's Army (Unit 58). Funding mainly comes from bilateral agreements with donor countries, UNDP, and INGOs. The request subsequently clarifies that reliance on external funding complicates long-term planning and staffing, with fluctuations leading to loss of trained personnel and hindering progress.

The Analysis Group expresses its appreciation to Lao PDR for the significant progress achieved in the past extension period and overall, from 2010–2023. The Group welcomes Lao PDR's explicit integration of humanitarian demining efforts within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and increasing efforts in mainstreaming gender and diversity considerations as well as environmental ones. The Analysis Group also welcomes Lao PDR's UXO Sector Working Group, which is akin to a Country Coalition, and which has been strengthened since the first extension period, ensuring strengthened coordination.

Madam President,

Given all of this, the Analysis Group recommends that the Meeting grants Lao PDR its request for an extension until 1 August 2030. In granting this request, the Analysis Group strongly recommends Lao PDR reporting on progress made on the implementation of the work plan; updating information on remaining confirmed contamination and outstanding areas to be subject to survey; and detailing updated annual plans for the implementation of its extension request based on new information gathered from survey activities.

Thank you.