



**Statement by Mr. Daovy VONGXAY,  
Director General, Department of International Organizations,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR  
At the 12th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions,  
10-13 September 2024, Geneva, Switzerland**

*Item 8: General Exchange of Views*

**Madame President,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates**

On behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I extend our deepest gratitude to you, Ambassador, your team, and the Secretariat for your tireless efforts in advancing the Convention and preparing for this annual Meeting of States Parties.

**Madame President,**

The Lao PDR holds the Convention on Cluster Munitions in the highest regard, and our commitment to its principles and objectives remains steadfast. As the most heavily impacted country in the world, we experience firsthand the devastating and persistent effects of these inhumane weapons. Since the 1960s, we have witnessed the tragic loss of innocent lives, the maiming of countless others, and the widespread destruction of livelihoods, infrastructure, and the environment. Although nearly 50 years have passed since the end of the conflict, the remnants of cluster munitions continue to threaten, endangering not only our people but also impeding our development agenda.

Based on the U.S. bombing data, it is estimated that approximately 87,000 square kilometers of Lao PDR are suspected to be contaminated. This contamination stems from bombing missions conducted between 1964 and 1975, which impacted roughly one-third of the country's territory. Specifically, the initial estimate of cluster munitions contamination stands at around 8,470 square kilometers, with an estimated 80 million unexploded submunitions still remaining.

Since the establishment of the National UXO-Lao Programme in 1996, we have made significant strides in UXO/mine action activities. To date, we have cleared land and destroyed over 1.9 million UXO. Despite this remarkable progress, the deadly remnants of cluster munitions continue to threaten our civilians, with accidents still occurring each year. Over the past decade, these

remnants have tragically claimed or injured between 30 and 60 lives annually, with children comprising the majority of the victims. Therefore, our mission to eliminate these threats is not merely an economic necessity but a profound moral obligation.

### **Excellencies,**

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the internal restructuring of our National Regulatory Body. In September 2023, the Government of the Lao PDR restructured the Board of the National Steering Committee on Addressing UXO Issues, placing it under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are currently in a transition period and are working closely with all development partners to enhance the Committee's effectiveness and efficiency.

This restructuring underscores our unwavering commitment to addressing the issue of UXO, which remains a top national priority. By placing the Committee under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, we are emphasizing our dedication to international cooperation and diplomatic engagement in addressing UXO issues.

In this connection, I would like to express our intention to serve as Presidency for the Third Review Conference of States Parties of the CCM (2025-2026).

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

As we convene today, we must remain mindful of the primary objective of the CCM: to eliminate the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions through a comprehensive prohibition and framework for action. However, we are acutely aware of the complexities and challenges associated with achieving universalization and effective implementation. We were deeply disheartened to learn of Lithuania's intention to withdraw from the CCM, and we join the global community in expressing our concern over this decision. We believe there is still time for Lithuania to reconsider and take a step that will benefit all of humanity in both the short and long term.

Therefore, we call on the international community to strengthen its commitment and cooperation in the face of these profound challenges. We must collectively foster the political will and determination necessary to support one another in upholding the shared objectives enshrined in the CCM.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering support for the CCM and emphasize that the eradication of cluster munitions is not only a matter of disarmament but also a cornerstone of sustainable development, peace, and security.

The Lao PDR stands ready to work closely with all States Parties and partners to uphold and fulfill the common objectives of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Thank you