



**Statement by Mr. Bounpheng SISAWAT,
Acting Director General, Office of the NRA (National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine
Action Sector in the Lao PDR)
At the 12th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions,
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Item 10 d: Victim Assistance

**Madame President,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

I would like to express our sincere thanks to the representatives of Austria and Panama for their work as coordinators on Victim Assistance.

Madame President,

Due to the fact that one third of our country is contaminated with UXO, lives and livelihoods of our people have been threatened by the danger of these remnants. Despite significant progress in clearing UXO and alerting populations to the dangers that lie beneath their feet, year on year, casualties from UXO continue to accumulate. The need to provide trauma care, rehabilitation and social welfare to the victims of cluster munitions continues and remains high to meet all demands. The situation that boys, girls, men and women find themselves in, when they accidentally trigger a munition emphasizes the urgent need to continue to provide assistance to victims. It is crucial to continue to fulfill the treaty obligations that Lao PDR is committed to, most notably the implementation of Article 5 of the CCM and Article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This aligns with achieving the national Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 18 "Lives Safe from UXO," and with the National Strategy for UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (2021-2030).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last year, the Government of Lao PDR has focused on improving assistance to victims through partnering with development agencies and other stakeholders at both the regional and national levels to advance the work of supporting victims. We have continued to mobilize funds to implement policies of the UXO Victim Assistance Fund in partnership with World Education, with financial support from the US government, this initiative will continue through to 2028.

Additionally, we have coordinated efforts with partners to expedite assistance to victims in two target provinces in northern Laos, supported by funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea. The key activities in this project include vocational training to provide opportunities for victims and their families to find jobs, providing assistive devices and rehabilitation equipment, and enhancing the quality of life to ensure sustainability by providing livestock to families affected by UXO. Through the implementation of this project throughout 2023 and early 2024, there are 2,846 people benefiting from this project.

However, services for victims in Lao PDR remain significantly underfunded. The Victim Assistance program remains a significant challenge. With budgetary constraints, there is inadequate funding to cover the requirements of the victim caseload that the country has.

Madame President,

In 2023, there were 22 UXO incidents, resulting in 47 victims. Among them, 11 lost their lives. Sadly, in the first six months of 2024, there have already been 20 incidents, with 43 victims of whom 30 were children which is equivalent for more than 50 percent. These children were killed by ordnance that were dropped even before their parents were born.

Currently, programmes and organizations responsible for supporting UXO victims in the Lao PDR are still limited in number and lack funding. Support to victims also often provides significant logistical challenges where the majority of accidents occur in remote rural areas, where communication and access are difficult. This complicates the collection of detailed information and the transportation of victims to receive medical treatment.

To address the decreasing availability of funds for victim assistance, we must find new mechanisms to mobilize resources to effectively organize and carry out these tasks according to the plans set forth. Therefore, the government of the Lao PDR proposes to parties herewith that efforts must be re-doubled to ensure that victims do not get left behind, and that support to victims merits the same efforts as clearance and risk education.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the partners, international organizations, and donor countries that have stood by and assisted the Lao PDR in the victim assistance over the years. Once again, I would like to reiterate that the Lao PDR is ready to continue working with you to ensure all lives are saved from UXO and leaving no one behind.

Thank you.