



STATEMENT

H.E. Mr. Anouparb VONGNORKEO
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“Item 8 General Exchange of View”

**The 13th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions**

16-19 September 2024, the Palais des Nations in Geneva

(Please check against delivery)

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to **the Republic of the Philippines** and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations for this 13th Meeting of States Parties.

The Lao PDR reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in realizing its main objectives. This year is of particular significance, as we commemorate **the 15th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention** - a historic milestone for addressing humanitarian concerns and achieving international disarmament objectives.

Lao PDR joins other States Parties in welcoming Vanuatu to the CCM.

Guided by its humanitarian principles and the severe consequences of the most affected communities, the Convention has established a strong legal and moral norm against the use of cluster munitions. It affirms that the use of these weapons causes indiscriminate and long-lasting harm, incompatible with international humanitarian law and human rights, especially the rights to life and development.

Therefore, the 15th anniversary is not only a timely moment for the international community to reflect on achievements, but also a call for the renewal of commitments, strengthening cooperation, and mobilizing the resources required to complete the life-saving work of the Convention.

Mr. President,

The Lao PDR has, for more than 5 decades, suffered from the devastating impacts of cluster munitions. Unexploded Ordnance contamination has continued to ripple across multiple dimensions of life, constraining both individual well-being and national development efforts.

The entry into force of the Convention has given new hope to all affected people. In this regard, the national strategy entitled “***Safe Path Forward III (for 2021–2030)***” is closely aligned with the CCM and the Lausanne Action Plan, ensuring that humanitarian action is integrated into the broader national development agenda, including the adoption of our national **SDG18: Live Safe from UXO**. More importantly, partnerships with States Parties, international and civil society organizations have enabled us to clear the land contaminated by millions of unexploded ordnance, deliver life-saving risk education, provide rehabilitation and basic support to thousands of survivors, and vast areas of land have been returned to agricultural use and infrastructure development.

Despite the progress made, challenges remain immense. It is estimated that some 80 million submunitions continue to contaminate our land and villages. Each year, accidents tragically claim lives, disproportionately affecting children and rural communities. This year, in particular, we have witnessed a sharp decline in development assistance, which has abruptly hindered the efforts for UXO clearances, leading to delayed progress. Many UXO operations have been halted, preventing us from conducting a life-saving operations. This situation has further exacerbated the already existing difficulties in UXO operation and funding challenges in the sector, including our obligation under the CCM.

The Lao PDR, therefore, calls on the international community to renew its commitment and provide the resources necessary to sustain this life-saving work. We count on the support and more enhanced partnership in order to mobilize sufficient resources and expertise necessary for addressing the complex and prolonged challenges of UXO contamination. Most importantly, the continued support is vital to ensure that the most affected countries, including Lao PDR, are not left behind in attaining the sustainable development goals and in fulfilling the objectives of the CCM.

Mr. President,

The CCM reflects as a landmark achievement of humanitarian disarmament, uniting the international community around the shared objective of preventing further suffering and ensuring that no nation or community endures the tragic legacy of these weapons. Each State Party has contributed to this collective endeavor, and every withdrawal risks weakening our common desire.

The Lao PDR regrets to learn of **Lithuania's withdrawal from the CCM**. As the country most heavily affected by these weapons, we know too well the devastating humanitarian, social, and economic consequences that cluster munitions continue to inflict on our people and communities. A step back from the CCM not only diminishes the global norm against cluster munitions but also undermines the hope and protection it offers to vulnerable populations around the world. We, therefore respectfully urge all States Parties to strongly reaffirm our commitment to the humanitarian principles at the heart of the Convention.

Mr. President,

For Lao PDR, the CCM represents more than a disarmament treaty and has remained as relevant as ever. It is a pathway to peace, development, and dignity for future generations. In this spirit, the Lao PDR is honored to assume **the Presidency of the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention, which will be held in Vientiane in 2026**. This is both a historic and meaningful responsibility for Lao PDR, and for the global community to remain united in the efforts to advance the global campaign against cluster munitions.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the Lao PDR's unwavering commitment to the Convention and call upon the international community to accelerate the progress toward a world free from cluster munitions.

The Lao PDR stands ready to work closely with all States Parties and partners to uphold and fulfill our shared objectives under the CCM.

Thank you.