

Statement by Lao PDR
Clearance and Risk Reduction Education
7th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
4-6 September 2017, Geneva

Thank you Mr President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to Norway and the Netherlands for their comprehensive report, as coordinators on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education.

It is my pleasure to announce that the Lao PDR will serve as a Coordinator on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education for the term 2017-2019. We, therefore, look forward to continue working closely with all States Parties and the international community in this matters.

Distinguished delegates,

Lao Government has been doing its utmost to improve its national survey and clearance. In 2015, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR commenced non-technical and technical surveys in 9 affected provinces. This has led to the successful creation of almost one thousand and five hundred (1,411) Confirmed Hazard Areas (CHAs) covering more than eighteen thousand (18,419.95) ha in 2016. The same year, the sector cleared more than four thousand (4,062.29) ha and has destroyed more than one hundred thousand (109,115) UXO through both CHA clearance and roving tasks. Throughout 2017, our UXO sector has been reviewing, with the support of the United State and UNDP, the initial work in non-technical and technical survey in order to determine how to improve the work in clearance. The sector has determined that expanding the use of the Information Management System for Mine Action to support survey planning and the review of all historical data, electronic and paper, will ensure that the non-technical survey will be followed by a robust technical survey. As a consequence, this process should lessen the number of follow up visits to villages after survey is concluded and provide a sound and reasonable quantification of the contamination in Lao PDR.

Mr. President,

Lao PDR has also developed a prioritised planning system for CHA clearances which will be trialled in two provinces, Champasak and Salavanh Province, this year with

support from Japan. Finally, Lao PDR, with support from the the United States will commence the national cluster munition survey next year. The strategy for this survey was developed with support from UNDP and will start in 6 provinces. It is foreseen that after 3 years of survey, Lao PDR can provide an accurate data centric estimation of overall cluster munitions contaminated areas in Laos. Initial result from survey, in one year found CHAs that will take our 5 year for 1400 UXO Lao Staffs to clear. As survey quantifies the extent of contamination in Lao, there will be a need to ensure that there is early follow up clearance in priority areas. This will require a significant increase in clearance resources in order for Lao PDR to meets its obligations under Article 4 of the Convention.

Excellencies,

With regard to Risk Education (RE), despite the good progress of more efficient clearance, we are still experiencing a number of accidents and victims. In 2016, we reported 50 UXO accidents with 59 victims. With a view to lower the number of victims, a review of the RE approach will be undertaken to complement the US funded survey strategy and the new procedures that this entails.

Laos has taken steps to increase the effectiveness of Risk Education through the development of a supplementary UXO curriculum for primary schools, and through sport activities and village visits in at-risk areas. Radio messages are regularly broadcasted in coordination with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism in four of the most contaminated provinces.

Dear colleagues,

Lao PDR has a strong commitment to ensure that the number of victim decreases. People, especially children, who are our future generation should be safe from UXO. Lao PDR would not be able to realise this commitment alone. On behalf of the Lao Government, I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to donors, international organisations and NGOs for their continued assistance and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.