

Statement by Lao Delegation
On Clearance and Risk Reduction Education
The Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
25-27 November 2020, Switzerland

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation would like to express our appreciation to Sweden and Afghanistan, our fellows' coordinator on clearance and risk reduction education, for their great efforts.

As one of the most heavily cluster munition contaminated country in the world, the Lao PDR has listed the clearance and risk reduction education as one of our national priorities. Since the First Review Conference, the Lao PDR has been working with all stakeholders in implementing the Dubrovnik Action Plan to increase progress in the area of cluster munition clearance and risk reduction.

From 2016 – 2020, throughout a hard work of the National Operator “UXO-Lao” and five humanitarian clearance operators have 25,250 Hectares of land, whereas the Non-Technical Survey has been conducted in 1,869 villages, conducted Technical Survey in 1,286 villages pertaining CHA of 101,398 Ha and 504,684 UXO items were destroyed. Currently, the Lao PDR is in the process of developing a national standard in the area of Mine Risks Education including upgrading all advocacy materials and expanding radio programme for nationwide broadcasting. As the result, people are able to live on their land safely from cluster munition remnant, the community finally can pursue development projects such as building roads, school and irrigation to improve livelihood. More importantly our girls and boys can have a normal kid's life of playing around without fear of detonating the unexploded bombs.

Despite the remarkable progress achieved in the past five years, it is widely known that the magnitude of cluster munitions contamination in the Lao PDR is greater than the existing means and resources to cope with. Thus, in 2019 the Lao PDR has submitted the request for the extension of clearance under the CCM Article 4.

Mr. President,

In order to acquire concrete action plan in implementing the granted 5 years Extension of Clearance under Article 4, the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action Programme (NRA) initially conducted capacity building for provincial authorities on identifying priority area following the National Standard combined with Social-Economic Development Plan. The output of this training will be used in Non-Technical Survey (NTS), Technical Survey (TS) and clearance plan respectively. Undeniably, the recent outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted the clearance and risk reduction plan. As the result, only 5 provinces out of 15 cluster munition contaminated provinces have completed their planned trainings, which equivalent to only 30 percent of our target. Nevertheless, in order to cope with COVID-19, we have integrated COVID-19 Prevention Measure Information with the MRE during the awareness raising in the communities.

For the foreseeable future, the Lao PDR will integrate the CCM Article 4 Extension Plan into the indicators of the 9th National Social-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2021-2025, where the five-years plan set targets to conduct the Non-Technical Surveys for 2,776 villages; conduct the Technical Surveys to confirm hazardous area (CHA) for 250,000 Hectares (Average: 50,000 Ha/year) to 50,000 Hectares (Average: 10,000 Ha/year); conduct Mine Risk Education in 3,000 village; to increase number of schools teaching about UXO in 500 schools; and to maintain minimum UXO Victim to be below 40 people/year and to provide assistance to UXO victims in a more comprehensive manner.

Mr. President,

The achievements highlighted above would not have been made possible without the support from our development partners including donor' countries, international organizations and civil societies. I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation for all the valuable assistance and cooperation.

Lastly, Lao PDR reaffirms our commitment to doing our utmost effort to clear cluster munition remnant from our territory and fulfilling our obligations under the convention. We will continue working closely with development partners to overcome challenges and obstacles ensuring all lives are safe from UXO.

I Thank you