

Statement by Lao PDR
Clearance and Risk Reduction Education
6th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
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Thank you Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, my delegation would like to express our appreciation to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Norway, Coordinators on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education for their comprehensive report.

Lao Government has been doing its utmost to improve its national survey and clearance. In 2015, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR has conducted Non-technical and Technical Surveys in 6 Provinces. This has led to the successful creation of more than 1,800 Confirmed Hazard Areas (CHAs) covering 10,000 ha. In the same year, the Sector cleared 4,522 ha and has destroyed 133,513 UXO through both CHA clearance and roving tasks. As the result of the 2015 accredited evidence based survey system, the amount of UXO destroyed per ha remains at a high level, at 17 bombies per hectare.

With support from the international community, new methodologies and technologies were introduced. In this context, the Government of Republic of Korea has provided training for Lao Army Humanitarian Clearance Teams which will be soon deployed to conduct UXO survey and clearance in UXO contamination across the country. Earlier this year, a KOMATSU sub-munitions clearance machine for ‘bombie’ destruction was provided by Japan. However, the project for mechanization of clearance requires further study. In addition, the sector will review the current evidence based survey system to determine any possible improvement in this regards.

Mr. President,

Lao PDR has also developed a prioritised planning system for CHA clearances which will be implemented in 2017. Finally, Lao PDR, with support from UNDP, has developed a National Non-Technical Survey and Technical Survey strategy that will provide full national cluster munitions survey for Lao PDR; with the Non-Technical Survey taking 4 years and Technical Survey running currently and lasting for 5 years. After 3 years of survey, Lao PDR can provide an accurate data centric estimation of overall cluster munitions contamination in Laos.

Laos still relies heavily on manual clearance methods and we have the potential to significantly increase our manual clearance resources. As stated earlier, last year the Sector created ha of CHAs and engaged over 1200 staffs undertaking successful clearances mission in 4,522 ha. The Non-Technical Survey and Technical Survey survey strategy will accurately locate CHAs. However, continued support to clear CHAs is required in order for Laos to meet its obligation in Article 4 of the Convention.

Excellencies,

With regard to Risk Education, despite the good progress of more efficient clearance, we are still experiencing high number of accidents and victims. In 2015 we reported 27 UXO accidents with 42 victims. Those who are most at risk continue to be boys and men, with the most common cause of accidents being people making fires. A review of the RE approach will be undertaken to match the US funded survey strategy (or the national survey strategy that is still awaiting funding), this review will ensure that new interventions take into account age and gender sensitivities.

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 victims decrease. People especially children who are our future generation should be safe from UXO. Certainly, 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 your continued assistance and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.