

**Statement by the delegation of the LAO PDR on Clearance and Risk
Reduction**

Convention on Cluster Munitions Intercessional meeting

April 2013, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Lao PDR has continued to clear UXO and provide safe land for the people of the country. It is our pleasure to work with the Republic of Ireland to coordinate the working group on clearance and Risk Reduction.

Between 1996 and the end of December 2012, the UXO Sector in Lao PDR cleared a total of 38,282 hectares (including 5,603 hectares during the year 2012). In addition, UXO operators conducted operations that have resulted in the destruction of 599,348 submunitions, including 46,091 submunitions during 2012. Risk Education sessions have been conducted during 14,808 village visits to schools and communities throughout the country – 877 of those during 2012.

Our current estimate of cluster munitions contamination is based largely on US bombing records which indicate that there were approximately 70,000 individual target locations throughout the country, against which there were often multiple strikes, each with an average 12 hectares spread.

Lao PDR continues to develop a survey process that will allow us to continue to develop a more refined strategic plan for future work in Laos, based on more accurate and detailed data. We are continually striving for ways to improve the survey process and this will continue with a survey workshop for all operators to be held in the south of the country next month. The results from the survey will be used in conjunction with the

government's development strategies as laid out in the National Socio-economic Development Plan.

This full process of survey will take several years but is well supported by three INGOs involved in trialling processes which will subsequently be refined by Laos. These results will contribute to a greater clarity concerning how much contaminated land remains and a better ability to plan and prioritise resources, enabling Lao PDR to more efficiently and effectively achieve CCM targets and free our country from UXO. We hope that the estimate of 8,470 km² of cluster munitions contamination will be reduced steadily as the results from the survey come in.

Lao PDR is also investing in improved technology, opening our doors for equipment to be trialled in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of clearance by trials of geophysical survey and data logging equipment.

Significant clearance activity throughout the country, combined with on-going risk education activities, continues to contribute to a steady decrease in casualties. In 2012, a total of 56 victims were recorded – the lowest annual figure recorded since the second Indochina war and less than twenty per cent of the number of casualties five years ago. This appears to be due to a combination of factors, including on-going clearance, risk education, steadily decreasing poverty and a fall in the price of scrap metal.

The sector has developed much since we met here in Geneva last year. An additional operator, the HALO Trust, is now operational in Savannakhet province and DanChurch Aid is in the process of initiating activities in Lao. They complement an existing capacity of 18 clearance organisations. At the end of 2012, there were 12 commercial, 5 INGO and UXO Lao, the national clearance organisation that collectively field more than 2,500 national staff working in the sector. The sector also has several local Non-profit Associations who are supporting our effort with risk education activities.

Each step brings Lao PDR closer to fulfilling our obligations as a State Party to the CCM, to achieving the MDGs – in particular, our own MDG 9, and to lifting our country out of poverty.

On behalf of the Lao delegation, I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to donor countries, to international organisations and NGOs for your continued assistance and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.