

Statement by
Delegation of Lao PDR on Victim Assistance
at Intersessional Meeting of States Parties to CCM

28 June 2011, Geneva

Mr./Madam Chair,

On behalf of the Lao Delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to Austria, friend of the President on victim assistance for the hard work and contribution to advance the course of our convention. Let me share with you a short update on the Lao PDR's recent effort to implement its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, as well as relevant action points of the Vientiane Action Plan related to Victim Assistance.

As an affected country, we attached great importance to the issue of victim assistance. According to our National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents Phase I, 50.136 casualties have been recorded for the period from 1964 to 2008. The post conflict record shows an average of about 300 hundred casualties per year. However, in the last few years, due to our intense effort on mine risk education and the progress made on clearance, the number of casualties has fallen remarkably to 117 in 2010. Despite this success, a lot remains to be done to meet requirement on victim assistance.

One of our efforts was the development of the position papers by the **National Regulatory Authority for the UXO Sector (NRA)** on **data collection, medical care, physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, economic rehabilitation and vocational training**, as well as **advocacy**. These position papers resulted from extensive consultations and inputs from victim assistance stakeholders gathered during recent years. They also formed the basis for a draft **Victim Assistance Strategic Plan**. This draft strategy was presented during a meeting of the **Technical Working Group** on Victim Assistance held on May 25th, 2011.

The NRA was designated as the focal point within the Government to coordinate the development, implementation and monitoring of victim assistance policies. The NRA keeps updating its casualty database. Unfortunately, as indicated in the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor, the total number of survivors in the Lao PDR is not yet known. Therefore, the NRA recently began developing a '**survivor tracking system**' in cooperation with all victim assistance stakeholders meeting within the framework of the Technical Working Group on Victim Assistance. A survivor tracking questionnaire is now ready and will be utilized within affected communities as part of a broader **District Focus Approach** to the Management of the UXO Threat. The survivor tracking system is being developed in close

cooperation with provincial and district authorities and should eventually provide an accurate picture of survivor needs in the Lao PDR.

The **Victim Assistance Technical Working Group** is the **national coordination mechanism** for victim assistance. It involves all victim assistance stakeholders, including a growing number of cluster munitions survivors from the **Lao Ban Advocates**.

Availability, accessibility and quality of services in the areas of data collection, rehabilitation and psychological support, economic and social inclusion have been reviewed through the production of the position papers I mentioned earlier. Proposals for future action are included in the draft Strategy Plan for Victim Assistance.

National laws and policies have been reviewed as part of the preparation of the position papers. Although a **Prime Minister Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** has yet to be passed, the conclusion is that there are sufficient national laws and policies to achieve CCM requirements.

Concerning awareness raising among cluster munition victims, this role is fulfilled by the combined efforts of the **Lao Disabled Peoples Association**, the **Lao Ban Advocates** and the **NRA**.

Concerning the implementation of standards and guidelines, the Lao PDR strives to implement those that are most relevant to its context and resources.

Mobilization of national and international resources for victim assistance remains very challenging. While an increase of international resources was reported in recent months, the Lao Government has generally not been able to fund services for disabled. A preliminary estimate of costs related to the implementation of the Lao PDR's upcoming Victim Assistance Strategy Plan indicates that about 23 million US dollars will be required in the coming five years.

The inclusion of cluster munition survivors, is greatly supported by the work of the Lao Ban Advocates. However, more efforts are needed to "actively involve cluster munition survivors and their representative organizations" as required under Article 5 of the Convention.

Let me conclude by expressing our thanks and gratitude to all stakeholders that provide assistance and cooperation to us on victim assistance and wishing for continued support and assistance on this issue.

Thank you for your attention.