



**International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action**

Remarks

Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator

4 April 2010

*H.E Lieutenant-General Douangchay Phichith, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Chairman of NRA*

*H.E. Mrs Onechanh Thammavong, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare*

*Mr. Somnuk Vorasan, acting Director of NRA,*

*Participants,*

Good morning! It is my great pleasure to wish you all a warm welcome to celebrate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. We are here to remember, and also to remind those not present, what a grave threat landmines and explosive remnants of war pose to millions of people every day, all around the world. In Lao PDR, it is one man, woman or child being killed or injured almost every day by UXO, mostly by cluster

munitions, and each death is too much. *Bombies not only remove arms and legs, but also jobs and education.*

We all know that Lao PDR is a country that is most severely contaminated with cluster munitions. These weapons are found on roads, fields, river bends and school yards – in all the places where people live their everyday life.

Over 50 000 people have been killed or injured since 1964, and the casualty rate continues to be about 300 every year. *Even though the numbers are shocking, let us remember that we are not alone with this deadly challenge that is keeping us from reaching our full potential.*

*The future of Lao PDR is bright, in many ways.* Firstly, this is a country of young people, with over 50 % of the population considered young. It is a great potential. All of us should make sure that present and future generations continue making sure, that teachers can teach and children can learn, every day, without fear or danger.



Secondly, we have taken a leading role in showing the international community that we will not give up. It might take us many years to clear the UXO from the country, but we are confident in being able to do that, with continuous international support.

Having to live a life in an environment that is dangerous and even deadly is not acceptable – not for anyone. And this why we are here today, *showing our commitment to continue the battle against UXO and cluster munitions.*

With these words, I would like to wish you all once more welcome to this event.