

**The Convention on Cluster Munitions
Entry into Force**

International Press Conference in Bangkok

**Remarks by Mr Ian Holland
Deputy Resident Representative (P)**

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Distinguished guests,

Members of the Press, ladies and gentlemen,

Sunday the 1st August 2010 is a historic day. The Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed by 107 countries and ratified by 37, enters into force. This is a momentous humanitarian achievement and I want you all to join us in celebrating it.

Under article 1 of the treaty each state party undertakes never to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer cluster munitions. This is a major step forward in the UNs goal of strengthening peace and security through disarmament. This treaty stigmatizes and eventually eliminates a weapon that has caused so much suffering to people in over 30 countries around the world.

The Convention is also unique because it was developed together with both survivors and affected countries. That is why it is so strong, in particular on the full realization of the rights of people affected by cluster munitions. But we still need to work further in advocating its universalization and implementation. The Convention's success also relies on those states, who haven't yet signed or ratified the treaty, to come to the table.

The courage and leadership shown by the government of the Lao PDR, who will host the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention (1MSP) and be assuming the first Presidency, is an example for others to follow. It is the most heavily contaminated nation by Cluster Munitions and Unexploded Ordnance, UXO, in the world. In recent years, around 300 people are still injured or killed by UXO accidents.

In addition to the human suffering, UXO presence is also an impediment to the development of the Lao PDR and all other nations affected by cluster munitions. Substantial additional resources for UXO clearance are required before any kind of development such as road building, tourism development or school construction can take place. Therefore UXO clearance in Lao PDR is a precondition for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the Lao PDR, the UN supports the UXO sector both at the policy and the operations level through capacity development of the Government's National Regulatory Authority and UXO Lao, the national clearance operator. The NRA mainstreams UXO action into policy levels through its mandate in coordinating, regulating and monitoring all

implementing organizations in the UXO sector. UXO Lao has cleared approximately 23,000 hectares of priority agricultural land and development project sites since 1996 and conducted risk education.

On this occasion, I would like to extend the appreciation to donors such as Australia, Austria, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Japan, and Switzerland which have provided support to the UXO actions through UNDP in Lao PDR.

However, in order to fully implement the treaty more support from the international community is critical. According to Article 6 of the treaty, States, “in a position to do so,” now have an obligation to provide assistance to states affected by cluster munitions, in terms of survivor assistance, clearance, risk education and stockpile destruction. I call on all such countries to consider supporting the Lao PDR in its efforts to implement the Convention.

In this connection, a UXO Trust Fund has recently been established by the Government of the Lao PDR and UNDP, to support, effectively manage and channel all the contributions to the UXO sector in the country based on the framework of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

The Convention can improve the lives of the thousands of people who still suffer from the impact of cluster munitions, not only in the Lao PDR, but across South East Asia and all over the world. I call on all countries of the region to join the Convention as soon

as possible, in particular Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. States, civil society and the United Nations all have a responsibility to work together to ensure that this treaty is implemented and universalized.

The United Nations Secretary-General has said that the Convention's entry into force, just two years after its adoption, is a "major advance on the global disarmament agenda," and he has urged all states to ratify without delay.

We will continue to advocate for the full implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions worldwide to mitigate the dreadful humanitarian suffering of those affected by cluster munitions. For that purpose I will end by once again calling on all States to sign, ratify and implement the Convention.

Thank you