

Launching of the First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) and Trust Fund

**Opening Remarks by Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana
UNDP Resident Representative**



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Your Excellency Mr. Hiem Phommachanh, Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Ms. Alexandra Hiniker, Lao PDR Project Manager, Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC)

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Distinguished Panelists,

Dear Participants,

Let me warmly welcome you to the Media Launching Event on the 1st Meeting of States Parties and the Cluster Munitions Trust Fund to support the meeting. First of all, I want to congratulate Lao PDR for hosting of the First Meeting of the States Parties (1MSP) to the Convention, and assuming the first Presidency. Mr. Hiem, please take my warmest compliments to the Government for its leadership during the Oslo Process on cluster munitions.

By working closely with a small group of countries, international organizations and civil society, the Government of Lao PDR has taken us where we are: 106 countries have signed and 37 countries have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Convention will enter into force on 1 August 2010.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a historic achievement to provide a legal framework to end unacceptable harm to civilians. People suffer from the impact of cluster munitions in about 30 countries around the world. The Convention responds to this suffering with a series of specific, measurable and gender-sensitive obligations concerning victim assistance, as well as clearance of cluster munitions. The Convention also bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions.

The United Nations Secretary-General has welcomed the CCM as a “major advance on the global disarmament agenda,” and noted that the Convention’s entry into force just two years after its adoption demonstrated “the world’s collective revulsion at the impact of these terrible weapons.”

Very importantly, the Convention stigmatizes cluster munitions internationally, making it very difficult to use cluster munitions, even for States that have not yet joined to Convention.

The Convention also requires States Parties “in a position to do so” to provide international cooperation and assistance to States Parties affected by cluster munitions in terms of victim assistance, clearance, risk education and stockpile destruction. For Lao PDR and many others, this is a very welcome development.

Distinguished participants,

Let me take a moment to present the Lao PDR Cluster Munitions Trust Fund we are launching today. In practice, it is a tool to realize full implementation of the CCM based on the framework of the Vientiane Declaration

In order to meet its obligations under the Convention, the Government needs to mobilize resources. A Trust Fund, established by the Government of the Lao PDR and UNDP, will support, effectively manage and channel the contributions to the UXO

sector in Laos so that the Government of the Lao PDR can effectively implement the CCM based on the framework of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

There are many strengths to the Trust Fund, such as increased Government ownership, better coordination and effective prioritization, as well as long-term planning. The Steering Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with representatives from various ministries and donors, will provide advice and recommendations on the operation of the Trust Fund. In doing so, the Trust Fund ensures that UXO actions are aligned with other national strategic plans, in particular with the 7th NSEDP.

The Trust Fund is a modality to support a historic event for the Lao PDR and help eliminate UXO in the country. As Mr. Saleumxay will explain later, the Government has already advanced preparations for the 1MSP, under the leadership of His Excellency Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the able coordination of Mr. Saleumxay and his team.

The Government will need assistance from all of us – from development partners, neighboring countries and civil society, in many logistical and substantive areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must collectively ensure the success of the preparation, organization, outcomes, and the follow-up to the meeting and assist the Lao PDR in implementing its obligations under the treaty as soon as possible.

It is also important to make sure that the meeting itself will be properly financed. I warmly thank donors such as Australia, Canada, France and Ireland who have already contributed financial support to the 1MSP through the Trust Fund. Thank you also other donors such as Austria, Germany, Japan, Switzerland and United Kingdom, who have provided support to the UXO actions in the sector through UNDP, but also other donors and agencies who have made bilateral contributions.

We encourage all donors to utilise the new Trust Fund as an effective means of channeling funds to support the UXO sector.

The 1MSP is a major milestone but our common goal is to tackle the long lasting consequences of cluster munitions on communities in the Lao PDR and to advocate for the full implementation of the CCM worldwide.

We will continue to work together with all of you to mitigate the dreadful humanitarian suffering of those affected by cluster munitions. For that purpose, we call on all States to sign, ratify and implement the Convention without delay.

Thank you.