



Celebrating the Entry into Force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Remarks by Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator in the Lao PDR

ICTC, Vientiane, 1 August 2010

*Your Excellency, Dr Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Madame Onechanh, Your Excellency, Minister for Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare,
Honourable Monks,
Distinguished Excellencies,
Representatives of the Government, the Development Community, and many young
people sitting in this room,
Good morning.*

Please allow me to just read a statement from the Secretary-General of the United Nations today, on this historic day. I thought it would be important to share it with you. This was sent out yesterday and I'm taking the opportunity to read it to us here.

I will start with a quote, this is the SG speaking.

"I am delighted that the Convention on Cluster Munitions enters into force on 1st August 2010. This new instrument is a major advance for the global disarmament and humanitarian agendas, and will help us to counter the widespread insecurity and suffering caused by these terrible weapons, particularly among civilians and children.

I am particularly pleased that the Convention, which prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster weapons, enters into force in little more

than two years since its adoption. This highlights not only the world's collective revulsion at these abhorrent weapons, but also the power of collaboration among Governments, civil society and the United Nations to change attitudes and policies on a threat faced by all humankind. Such cooperation will be crucial as we seek now to implement the Convention, including through assistance to victims.

The First Meeting of States Parties will be held in November 2010 in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a country that has suffered tremendously from the impact of cluster munitions. I encourage all Member States to participate in this meeting to demonstrate their support for the Convention. And I call on those States which have yet to accede to the Convention, to do so without delay."

On behalf of all of us in this room I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the government for its leadership and for taking us, particularly those of us working in Lao PDR, to this point, the stage where we are, which is again as I've said earlier historic. Lao will be assuming the first Presidency after the First Meeting of States Parties in November.

Implementation of the Convention we know it will not be easy, it will be a real challenge and it will require constant attention from all of us sitting in this room to look at issues of clearance, support to the survivors, the links with poverty and many of the crucial issues that you are dealing with when you talk about UXO. And also to reiterate that we need strengthened collaboration and partnerships among all the partners from the development community here, from the civil society, and young people of Laos, the government, UN and also most importantly from the neighboring countries.

I want to also take this opportunity to extend a special appreciation to many donors and partners such as, Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Switzerland and UK, as well as others who will be joining, who have already provided support and are continuing to provide support for UXO activities in Lao PDR. A Trust Fund, which the government has just set up recently, is now operational, and we're counting on implementation and support through the Trust Fund, managed by the United Nations.

Today is a major milestone and we have come here to make this commitment to continue to advocate, to continue to implement the work against UXO here in Lao PDR and everywhere else in the world.