

**Special Event on Convention on Cluster Munitions  
Advance Mission for the First Meeting of States  
Parties (1MSP) to the CCM**

Remarks by Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator  
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Lao PDR

Your Excellency Mr. Phongsavath Boupha, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Excellencies

Distinguished Panelists

Dear Participants,

I would like to join His Excellency Mr Phongsavath Boupha in welcoming you all here today to this Special Event.

It is special because, as we know, we have cause to celebrate – the 30<sup>th</sup> ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions has been received in New York and the entry into force of this Convention is set for the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2010, a moment for which so many people in this room and beyond have worked so hard.

As His Excellency outlined, the scale of UXO in the Lao PDR is vast, and the presence of UXO is a barrier to development. Bombies destroy peoples'

livelihoods and we witness, daily, their humanitarian and socio-economic consequences. They continue to cause death, injuries and disability to people across the country. They prevent children from playing safely or walking to school, and prevent farmers from using their land to its full potential. UXO clearance in the Lao PDR is indeed the precondition for sustainable development

Today is also a day of national and international importance. We are gathered here together as partners - to support the Government in its hosting of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, an event of the highest magnitude, and to support its offer to assume the first Presidency.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of the Lao PDR for its leading role in this international movement, providing much of the momentum to reach where we are today. I would also like to welcome the Advance Mission comprising UN, the Norwegian Government and Civil Society members who are here to build even stronger partnerships to work towards the events over the coming two years.

First and foremost, we are here because we have a common goal: to tackle the devastating impact of cluster munitions and other UXO in the Lao PDR and to advocate for genuine, lasting solutions to these threats worldwide.

We know there is much to do and we cannot rest on our laurels. We can however be proud that, led by the Government, we have addressed this issue and raised the profile of the Lao PDR. Through the National Regulatory Authority and the National UXO Sector Strategy aligned with other national strategic plans, in particular with the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, there is a growing synergy, providing clear advancements and benefits.

Clearance is becoming ever more efficient and effective. We have also increased communities' awareness. Significant progress was recorded with the recent launch of the first ever nationwide victim survey, through which knowledge and analysis the areas of the country where concentrations of accidents have occurred can be prioritised for clearance and awareness activities, and survivors' needs can be addressed. In this regard I would also like to congratulate Lao PDR on its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These are truly positive developments that we need to cherish and continue to support - demonstrating that with concerted and coordinated solutions to the impacts of UXO, we can make major progress.

Through the requirement of this Convention to complete clearance in 10 years, we can work towards solutions to the cluster munitions and UXO threat for the Lao PDR. Indeed the Convention, with its global scale and provisions for the

assistance and cooperation from other states parties and with the support of , international organizations and civil society, can be the solution for the Lao PDR - provided the international community can accelerate its commitment to the sector, enabling the Government to maintain and strengthen its outstanding commitment.

The 2008 UXO sector evaluation shows that Lao PDR can at present capacity clear all contaminated agricultural land in 16 years.

However, by scaling up resources we can achieve this even quicker, perhaps in 10 years. With an increase of roving team capacity UXO Lao can reduce its response time to a few days rather than weeks, preventing people from becoming victims, and it can together with other clearance organizations work in affected provinces which currently have no clearance operations.

It is a sad fact that, despite the achievements in Oslo, the sector is still under-resourced. I call on all partners to help us deliver the wherewithal to return safe farmland to the people of Lao PDR and to discuss concretely today how we can work together to ensure those solutions for the people of the Lao PDR.

It is historic for the Lao PDR to host an international conference of this magnitude and scope, and the Government has already established preparation mechanisms 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 world will be watching the Lao PDR, this year, and next till the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of States Parties, and the Government will need assistance from the international community – from all of us - from states parties, from donor countries, neighboring countries, the UN system and civil society, in many logistical and substantive areas. We must collectively ensure the success of the preparation, organization, outcomes, and the follow-up to the meeting.

As you can see in the Advance Mission and the work we are doing within the Lao PDR, the UN is working as One for the UXO sector, with each agency playing their part. To name but a few, the UN Office on Disarmament Affairs – UNODA - and UNDPHQ/BCPR secretariat support and global support, UNICEF support to risk education and UNDP support to UXO Lao and the NRA

For aid effectiveness and better donor coordination, the Government requests that donors coordinate their assistances through the NRA, and I will ensure that UNDP accelerates its support to NRA for optimal coordination. I am pleased to report to you that UNDP and the Government of Lao PDR have set up a UXO trust fund, to effectively manage and channel contributions to the sector.

It is important to make sure that all UXO related activities including the meeting itself will be properly financed. I repeat the appreciation to donors such as Norway and Australia who have already pledged financial support. Thanks also to

donors such as Austria and Ireland who have pledged in-kind contributions to the NRA.

But it is equally important that the international community look beyond the Meeting and support the Government and people of the Lao PDR with the implementation of the Convention – the solutions to the cluster munitions threat - through financial contributions to UXO clearance operations and victim assistance. There are active donors who have regularly supported UXO Lao and NRA such as Japan, Australia, Luxembourg, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, EC and others. And it is my hope that more will follow, or come back.

Last but not least, allow me to reiterate the importance of strengthening partnership of all partners and stakeholders from donor countries, neighboring countries, the UN system, other multilateral organizations, civil society, mass media, and of course the Government of Lao PDR, at all levels – locally, regionally and globally - to make this event and the follow-up a success.

An important role of our partnership will be advocacy for full universalization and implementation of this Convention, and I end with some words from the Secretary General on the news of the 30<sup>th</sup> ratification of the Convention - he welcomes this major advance on the global disarmament agenda, and calls on all States to become a party to the Convention without delay.

I wish you all fruitful discussions.