



Signing ceremony between the Government of France and the United Nations Development Programme: Support to Convention on Cluster Munitions

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

Vientiane, Lao PDR
30 June 2010

Your Excellency Mr. Francois Sénémaud, Ambassador Extraordinary,

Ms. Viengsavanh Sipraseuth, Deputy Director General of Department of International
Organization

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the signing ceremony of the cooperation
agreement between France and UNDP, regarding the most welcome donation to the UXO
trust fund.

After France ratified the Convention as the twentieth country in September 2009, we have
seen many efforts from France to achieve wide international support for the Convention. Let
me once again commend the good cooperation with the French embassy here in Vientiane, it
has been a pleasure to work with you on this important issue.

As we all are aware, the presence and scale of UXO pose a large barrier to development in the
Lao PDR. Bombies not only cause death, injuries and disability to people across the country,

but they also destroy peoples' livelihoods. We are looking at an average of 300 people a year, when counting our losses in death and injuries to the people of this country.

In addition to causing a lot of human suffering, bombies prevent access to agricultural land. Because of these remnants of war, Lao PDR requires substantial additional resources for UXO clearance before any kind of development, such as road building, tourism development or school construction, can take place. Therefore, UXO clearance in the Lao PDR is a precondition for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and graduation of the country from the Least Developed Country status by 2020. For this purpose, the National Regulatory Authority is advancing mainstreaming UXO actions into policy levels through its mandate in coordinating, regulating and monitoring all implementing organisations in the UXO sector.

We are hopeful, as year 2010 provides a great chance for strengthening advocacy efforts and reaching wide international support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions. As the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said, the Convention is a major advance on the global disarmament agenda.

In light of this, it is truly a welcome contribution from France, highlighting the importance of the 1st Meeting of the States Parties on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and of course the implementation of the Convention itself.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Sénémaud, let me take this opportunity to also encourage other countries in following France in contributing to the UXO trust fund. This gives the Government of Lao PDR the much needed support, and helps to implement the Vientiane

Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As we know, it is crucial to accelerate and coordinate assistance from the international community to collectively make the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention a success, and beyond that, assist the Government of Lao PDR with the implementation of the Convention through UXO clearance and victim assistance.

Thank you.