

Remarks by H.E. Dr. Thongloun SISOULITH,

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs

at the celebration of the Entry into Force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

1st August 2010, ICTC, Vientiane

Venerable Monks

Madam Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR,

Ministers and Vice Ministers,

Diplomatic Corps, Representatives of International Organizations and NGOs

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is indeed a significant day for people around the world especially the Lao multi-ethnic people, particularly, for those who fell victims of explosive remnants of war, which continue to impose direct and long-term impacts on their lives and wellbeing. August 1st marks the beginning of the global joint effort by the international community to put an end to the fear and suspicion of threat by cluster munitions that the Lao people and millions of other innocent civilians around the world live with. The celebration of the Entry into Force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions today is a reflection of great achievement as a result of strong commitment by the international community to make our world free from threats of cluster munitions.

Distinguished guests,

Throughout the past decades, our human beings have suffered from cluster munitions. Million tons of cluster bombs were deployed as a means to fight in conflicts that affected more than 80 countries and even long after the wars ended those impacts continue to threaten their livelihood. The Lao PDR is among those affected and it is so sad that Lao population accounts roughly just 0.1% of the world population, but the number of victims in the Lao PDR caused by cluster bombs has made up around 50% of the total number of victims in the world. This figure clearly indicates that the Lao PDR is the most affected country in the world. In this connection, realizing objectives of the Oslo Convention and its effective implementation has become a highest aspiration of the Lao people - an aspiration

to see the Lao PDR free from threat of cluster bombs and the hope to see that no more people in other countries fall into the same fate that the Lao people have endured.

Distinguished guests,

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a humanitarian instrument that protects human being. Therefore, this convention has gained a broader support from many countries worldwide. To date, 107 countries signed and 37 states ratified. From now on, this Convention has fully become effective. For States Parties bound by this Convention, all provisions and measures stated in it must be fully implemented with a view to making this world free from cluster bombs in the future. To this end, I would like to make an appeal to all countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Oslo Convention to do so. The implementation of this Convention constitutes a significant contribution to the safeguard of peace and security in the world and to the protection of fundamental rights of humanity such as the right to survival, the rights to development and the right to live their lives without a fear of cluster bombs.

As the most affected nation in the world, the Government of Lao PDR has attached great importance to addressing the issue of unexploded ordinance (UXO). Despite financial constraints, the Lao Government has embarked on UXO clearance program since 1996 and adopted the national strategy on UXO for the period from 2003-2013, which is now under review to reflect the current reality and incorporated into the new phase of strategy for the period from 2010-2020. Furthermore, the UXO sector has already been mainstreamed into the National Socio-Economic Development Plan. Over the past 10 years, more than 25000 hectares of contaminated areas have been cleared and more than 1 million items of UXO, including sub-cluster munitions have been destroyed. In this connection, on behalf of the Lao Government and the Lao multi-ethnic people, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to donor countries and international organizations that have provided continued support to the Lao PDR in addressing the issues of UXO and I hope that we will continue to increasingly receive those valuable assistance in order to enable the Lao PDR to fulfill its obligations provided under the Oslo Convention as well as to alleviate impact of cluster munitions on the Lao people.

Distinguished guests,

Lao PDR has been entrusted by the international community to host the First Meeting of States Parties to Oslo Convention, which is scheduled from 9-12 November 2010 in Vientiane. This Meeting is extremely crucial for the implementation of the Oslo Convention, as it will determine directions and adopt practical measures including mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to once again invite all countries, international organizations and civil society as well as media from all around the world to attend and actively contribute to this

meeting with a view to ensuring a success and realizing its objectives. A broader participation by member states, whether as a state party or as an observer does reflect a resolve of the international community to ban cluster munitions that will turn our vision to action. At the same time, I would also like to encourage the Lao multi-ethnic people across the country and all Government agencies at central and local levels to actively take part in the preparation and hosting of this First Meeting of States Parties in order to ensure a great success.

In conclusion, I hope that the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be fully and effectively implemented throughout the world in the near future.

May I wish everyone good health and success in your noble duties.

I thank you.