

Statement by
Mr. Maythong Thammavongsa
Director of UN Political and Security Affairs Division,
Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as an observer
at the Meeting of Standing Committee of the Convention on the
Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of
Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction
Geneva, Switzerland, 21 June 2010


Madam Chair,^s,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak as an observer of this meeting. Allow me to join previous delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of chairmanship of the Meeting of Standing Committee of the Mine Ban Treaty. As a non party to this convention, I would like to share with you the status and progress toward accession to this convention.


Madam Chair,^s,

As you are aware, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war have caused great sufferings to the civilian population in many parts of the world. Despite the fact that tremendous efforts have been undertaken to relieve the pains in removing mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), much remains to be done, especially in the area of clearance, victim assistance and others. My country is one of those most affected countries by UXO and our government has spent great effort with assistance from international community to address the UXO issue. Our Government has undertaken serious clearance and victim assistance over the past two decades. Nonetheless, as our country is heavily contaminated by UXO, 14 out of 17 provinces are contaminated, especially by unexploded cluster submunitions, the task to clear all the contaminated land will take many hundred years. Since the beginning of the clearance work in 1996, we manage to clear just over 200 square kilometers of the total 87.000 square kilometers contaminated across the country. Over 1 million UXO items have been destroyed of those nearly 500.000 cluster submunitions and over 6.000 land mines.


Madam Chair,^s,

As regards the Mine Ban Treaty, allow me to share with the meeting the current progress toward our accession. Our position and determination to become a party to the Mine Ban Treaty has been spelt out in many occasions. As the most affected country by the explosive remnants of war, the Lao PDR has long supported the spirit and humanitarian objective of the Landmine Ban Treaty. For this reason, Lao PDR has been engaging itself in all international and regional undertakings to ban landmines, despite the fact that we are not yet a state party to this Treaty. Our

Government has announced in 2004 that we would accede to this convention, but we need time to prepare ourselves ready to take full obligations of the convention. Since then preparations have been made in order to allow us to meet all obligations stated therein. A number of workshops and seminars have been conducted to raise public awareness and improve national capacity, particularly for military personnel to understand their responsibilities. Also, since 2007, at the United Nations General Assembly we have voted in favour of the resolution on Implementation of the Mine Ban Convention which it reflected our firm support of the Convention. We are now in the process of consultation with all Ministries concerned to verify with readiness to meet all obligations stated in Ottawa Convention. We are confident that, with all the efforts we are undertaking and the support from the international community, the Lao PDR would be able to become party to Ottawa Convention in the coming years.


Madam Chair,

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, our profound gratitude to all donor countries, International Organizations and International NGOs for their generous assistance in support of our efforts to address this long-term humanitarian challenge. It is our earnest hope that greater aid and assistance would be forthcoming from the international community to the Lao PDR in her continued drive to achieve its objectives to address the UXO issues including land mines.

Thank you.

Recently, in April 2010, Lao Government welcomed the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al-Musseini of Jordan, President's Special Envoy on the universalisation of the AP Mine. Our government confirms our support to the humanitarian spirit of the convention and our challenges.