Special Envoy to visit Lao PDR to promote mine ban treaty

Vientiane 18 October 2019 – Mine Ban Special Envoy His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein is set to meet with Lao People’s Democratic Republic leadership on 24 October to encourage Laos to take concrete steps to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention which prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines; ensures their destruction and support victims of these weapons.

The Envoy will travel to Vientiane for a two-day visit where he will meet the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E Thongpane Savanphet; Minister for Defence H.E. Lt. Gen. Chansamone Chanyalath; Minister of Labour and Social Welfare H.E. Khampheng Saysompheng; and Prime Minister H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith.

Prince Mired’s visit is sponsored by a Decision adopted by the European Union Council seeking to support efforts to implement the Convention and promote its norms among States that have not yet joined such as the Lao PDR.

“This is an important reminder for Lao PDR leadership that the international community wishes to see Laos become an official Party to the Convention,” said H.E. Léon Paul Faber, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Lao PDR. “Mine, cluster munition and other unexploded ordnance contamination remains a threat to rural populations in poor and remote areas and impedes the safe use of land for socioeconomic development activities. Many of the poorest districts in the country are also among the most contaminated. To address these challenges, the European Union consistently provides mine action assistance to Lao PDR in cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). As part of its human security policy, supporting efforts to promote the Mine Ban Convention and its norms among States not party is also priority for the European Union and its Member States,” added the Ambassador.

In addition to the high level meetings, the Special Envoy will meet with the Directors of the National Regulatory Authority on UXO/Mine Action Programme (NRA); and, the UXO-Lao (National Operator), visit the Cooperative Orthotic & Prosthetic Enterprise COPE Centre which provides assistance to victims of explosive remnants of war included landmines, meet important mine action donors to Lao PDR, mine clearance operators and victim assistance providers.

To date, 164 States have joined the Convention; together the Parties have destroyed more than 52 million anti-personnel mines. Mine destruction and clearance efforts have saved countless lives and cleared millions of square metres of once-dangerous lands freeing them for their safe use.