

**Statement by Mr. Vilatsone VISONNAVONG,
Deputy Director General, Department of International Organizations,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR,
At the Intersessional Meeting of the Anti–Personal Mine Ban Convention
19-21 June 2023, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguish delegates,**

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the President this important meeting. I am confident that under your able leadership, our meeting will be guided to a successful conclusion.

Mr. President,

The Lao PDR is of the view that mines, cluster munition contamination, and other forms of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) pose a severe threat to our people's lives and socio-economic development. One-third of our country's territory is contaminated with Cluster Munition Remnants, hindering development.

To address this issue, the Government has prioritized the Convention of Cluster Munitions and has taken proactive measures at national, regional, and international levels. Additionally, the country has acceded to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and is a party to the Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

Moreover, Lao PDR has demonstrated a strong political will and a high level of commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munition (CCM). Addressing Cluster Munition Remnants has been a top priority for the Government, which has enacted legislation frameworks covering all aspects of mine action and established operational mechanisms to ensure the safety of our people's lives from all forms of Explosive Remnants of War.

Furthermore, Lao PDR was the first country to adopt national Sustainable Development Goals, with SDG 18: Lives Safe From UXO, highlighting its dedication to ensuring the country's socio-economic development is not hindered by the presence of unexploded ordnances.

Mr. President,

As a small country with limited resources and capacity to fulfill all international obligations, Lao PDR has prioritized the implementation of the CCM due to the ongoing threat of cluster munition contamination that continues to harm and kill our people. In 2022 alone, 16 UXO accidents resulted in 20 casualties, including 3 women, 9 men, and 8 boys.

Although Lao PDR still faces resource constraints and limited capacity to fully accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the country conducts clearance operations that include all forms of explosive remnants of war, including mines. In 2022, approximately 5,000 hectares of land were cleared, resulting in the destruction of 85,000 ordnances, including 54 mines.

Despite our efforts, UXO/Mine Action continues to be a challenge due to the extensive contamination of Cluster Munition Remnants in the country. This challenge is reflected in our recent request for an extension of clearance under the Cluster Munition Convention, and we anticipate submitting a second request in the coming years.

Therefore, we hope for increased international assistance to address the long-term humanitarian challenges in the Mine Action sector. As a government, we are committed to redoubling our efforts to meet our international obligations.

Mr. President,

Although Lao PDR has not yet become a State Party to the Mine Ban Convention, the country has experienced the devastating impact of cluster munitions firsthand as the most affected nation. Despite not being a party to the Convention, Lao PDR has consistently supported its humanitarian spirit and engaged in international and regional efforts to promote it. The country has also demonstrated its commitment to the Convention by attending the 4th Review Conference held in Oslo in 2019 at the highest level, with the Deputy Minister declaring our intention to submit a national voluntary report in 2020. However, the global pandemic has slowed down the process, causing delays.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the Government of the Lao PDR is currently reforming our National Committee on UXO/Mine Action. The highest national committee will now be chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this regard, our Department of International Organizations, on behalf of the national secretariat for the

new national committee, will lead the internal consultation and submit the 2nd National Voluntary Report to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention by next year.

Mr. President,

Despite facing resource constraints and limited capacity, Lao PDR has prioritized and maximized our national capacity to focus on implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions aligned with our national socio-economic development. As a result, we have not yet fully acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. However, we are confident that with consistent support and assistance from the international community, we will be able to accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in the near future. In the meantime, Lao PDR will continue to engage with countries affected by explosive remnants of war, sharing our experiences on implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions alongside the Mine Ban Convention.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize our strong political will and commitment to take important steps and enhance the understanding of relevant stakeholders to increase efforts to implement certain clauses of the humanitarian spirit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention alongside the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I thank you.