

Check against delivery

Statement by H.E Thongphane SAVANHPHET,

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At the 4th Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the
Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mine and
their Destruction

Oslo 29 November 2019

Excellencies,

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to begin by expressing our sincere appreciation to the Government of Norway for hosting the 4th Review Conference and giving this opportunity for the Lao PDR, as an observer state to attend this Conference.

Although the Lao PDR is not yet a Party to the Mine Ban Convention, being one of the most affected countries by Explosive Remnants of War, the Lao PDR fully understands the real impact caused by these unfortunate legacies of war and has continued to pursue a firm policy and remains strongly committed towards global disarmament. In 2008, here in Oslo, it was a great honor for the Lao PDR to be the second country that signed the

CCM, after our host country Norway. We are of the view that Mines and other Explosive Remnants of War all pose a great danger to the lives of innocent people and obstruct socio-economic development. Recognizing the importance of the Convention, Lao PDR has always been a strong supporter of the humanitarian spirit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which we consider a sister Convention to the CCM. This has been further reflected in our continued active engagement in all relevant regional and international efforts to promote the spirit of the Convention, including voting in favor of all relevant Resolutions tabled at the United Nations. At regional level, through ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center, has organized a series of workshops in order to exchange information and experiences on addressing the impact of ERW. Our presence here at this Review Conference further reaffirms our unwavering support to the spirit and principles of the Mine Ban Convention. Moreover, the Lao PDR has previously voluntarily submitted a national report under Article 7 of the Convention in 2011 and is now in the process of preparing the second voluntary report.

Just recently, it has been a great honor for the Lao Government to welcome the visit by HRH Prince Mired, a Special Envoy of the Mine Ban Convention during which His Royal Highness has had fruitful meetings with our Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, President of National UXO/Mine

Action Board. In addition, HRH also witnessed and experienced actual UXO clearance activity and visited Mine victim assistance center. All this has further marked an important milestone in enhancing better understanding among relevant stakeholders in the Lao PDR on the implementation of certain clauses under the Mine Ban Convention alongside CCM.

Excellencies,

The Lao PDR has the distinction of being one of the most heavily bombed nations in the world, where more than two hundred seventy (270) million cluster sub-munitions were dropped on our land making one third (1/3) of the country territory contaminated with unexploded ordnances which continued to maim and kill innocent people and remain obstacles to the country's socio-economic development until today.

Remarkable progress has been made, thanks to the continued assistance from the international community, more than 53,000 hectares of land have been cleared from all types of Explosive Remnants of War, where more than 1,5 million cluster munitions and 2,000 mines have been found and destroyed and the number of casualties has also significantly reduced from 308 in 2008 to 24 in 2018.

Despite all the afore-mentioned efforts, UXO/Mine Action issue remains a key challenge due to a vast intensity of Cluster Munitions Remnants contamination in the country. This has been reflected by our recent clearance extension request submitted under the obligations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The past experiences have shown that survey and clearance operation has been a difficult, time-consuming and very complex task, given the geographical landscape of the country. Therefore, it is our profound hope that the international assistance and support will be continued and increased for the Mine Action sector in the Lao PDR to fully address these long-term humanitarian challenges.

Excellencies,

Being a least developed country with limited resources and capacity, it remains challenging for the Lao PDR at this stage to fully fulfill international obligations under various international conventions as we need to prioritize and maximize our national capacity focusing on the areas that pose greatest constraints to and severely hampered our national social-economic development efforts. Nevertheless, we are confident that with the consistent support and assistance from the international community, Lao PDR would be able to accede the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in the near future. On this note, the Lao PDR will continue to engage with all ERW affected countries especially in sharing

experiences and best practices on implementing the CCM alongside with Mine Ban Convention.

On a final note, I would like to reiterate the Lao PDR's strong political will and support to the humanitarian spirit of the Mine Ban Convention in making our people's lives safe from all Explosive Remnants of War.

I thank you.