

Statement by
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People's Democratic Republic
At the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the
Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-
Personnel Mines and their Destruction
Bangkok, Thailand, 17 September 2003

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to associate with other delegations in congratulating you for your assumption to the presidency of the Fifth Meeting of the State Parties to the Mine Ban Convention. I am confident that with your rich experience and diplomatic skills, our deliberations will steer to a successful conclusion. I would like also to take this opportunity to appreciate the Government and the people of Thailand for their tireless efforts in hosting this Meeting and gracious hospitality.

Mr. President,

My delegation has closely followed up the implementation process of the Mine Ban Convention. It has also participated in several activities of the Convention, based on our capacity. And, my delegation is impressed to observe both remarkable qualitative and quantitative achievements, which have been made since the Convention entered into force. These would lead to gradual achieving a mine-free world.

Despite outstanding achievements, we should not ignore the fact that several thousands of innocent people are still being killed or injured each year by the landmine and other unexploded ordinances. The impacts on livelihood of the people and the obstacle to the socio-economic development of the affected nations are tremendous. Every effort should, therefore, be made to intensify international cooperation in addressing these problems, particularly more emphasize should be put on the victim assistance and affected countries. In our views, through renew political commitments, vigorous collective efforts, and an adequate resource to meet the increased mine action programmes, human being will be free from indiscriminate effects of these weapons. For our part, we will do our utmost to cooperate with the international community in this endeavor.

Mr. President,

Although the Lao PDR is not a party to the Convention, the implementation of the UXO Programme, which focuses on community awareness, training and capacity building, survey, clearance and victim assistance and mine and UXO clearance in the process of border demarcation with our neighboring countries have contributed practically to the implementation of the Convention provisions. Our interests in the Convention remain

unchanged. We share the humanitarian endeavors of the Convention and the concern of the international community on impacts of landmines and others on innocent people. In addition, we will continue our further efforts to consider the possibility and ability of our country to accede to the Convention.

The Lao PDR, is today still serious affected by mine and unexploded ordnance as result of Indo-China War, especially between 1964-1973. During this period over 500, 000 bombing mission were launched, dropping more than two million tons of bombs. Therefore, the Lao PDR has been considered to be one of the most heavily ordnance contaminated nations in the world.

About three decades after the end of the war, mines and unexploded ordnance contamination still affects up to 50% of the country's total landmass. Since 1975, there have been 11,000 casualties, most of whom have been children and women or subsistence farmers. It continues to claim lives and represent a major threat to livelihood of the population. High level of poverty in the rural communities often correlate with high level of mines and UXO contamination. Consequently, it is expected that this situation will continue for a long period.

Mr. President,

The Lao Government has drawn up a comprehensive UXO Programme to address this problem in all its humanitarian, social and environmental dimensions within a framework of overall socio-economic development and poverty reduction programme. At the present time, more efforts have been exerted by the Lao Government to work out the UXO Strategic Plan 2003-2013, aimed at strengthening and restructuring UXO Lao and prioritizing its activities.

As the limited of domestic resources, UXO Trust Fund continues to be the main channel for contributions to the work of UXO Lao. The funding and programme have been supported by UNDP, UNICEF, EU as well as the Government of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Finland, France, Italy Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, the United States and United Kingdom. The program is also supported by some NGO implementing partners such as Handicap International, Mine Advisory group, Norwegian People's Aid and Gerberra of Germany

In this regard, The Lao Government would like to express its sincere gratitude to all donors and implementing partners for their generous assistance and support which have rendered the UXO Lao Trust Fund activities possible. It is our fervent hope that the international community would continue to lend its support and assistance to our arduous efforts in trying to achieve the objectives as set out in the Program.

I wish the Fifth Meeting of the State Parties to Mine Ban Convention to be successful.

Thank you for your attention.