

Mr. Maythong Thammavongsa



Statement by  
Delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as an observer  
at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to Convention on the Prohibition of  
the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of  
Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction  
Geneva, 2 December 2010

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**Check Against Delivery**

**Mr. President,**

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 the presidency of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties of the Mine Ban Convention. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our thanks for the sponsorship program that enables our participation at this meeting possible. As a non party to this convention, I would like to focus on the progress the Lao Government has been undertaking toward accession to this convention.

**Mr. President,**

Mines and explosive remnants of war continue to take lives and limbs and pose great obstacles on socio-economic development of the civilian populations in many parts of the world. As the most heavily bombed country per capita on earth, Lao PDR knows too well the long lasting deadly impacts of ERW. Since 1964, unexploded ordnance has killed and maimed more than 50.000 Lao people and even today, UXO continues to victimize about 300 Lao innocent civilians every year, deprive the rights of the Lao people to cultivate and develop agricultural lands as they remain contaminated by unexploded ordnance. The UXO clearance proved time consuming and very expensive, therefore the Lao PDR would require hundreds of years to clear all UXO contaminated areas since the contamination is so huge covering around one third of the total country's land area. In this context, the Lao PDR has attached great importance to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are also pleased, as the most contaminated country by cluster munitions, to host the First Meeting of States Parties to the Oslo Convention from 9-12 November 2010 in Vientiane. The Meeting was successfully concluded with the adoption of strong Vientiane political declaration and comprehensive Vientiane Action Plan containing 66 actions that will be used as guidance and tools for the effective implementation of the Convention in the coming years. Once again, we would like to express our highest appreciation for the wide participation and active contribution to making the First Meeting a success.

**Mr. President,**

As regards the Mine Ban Treaty, it is clear that, as the most affected country by the explosive remnants of war, the Lao PDR has long supported the spirit and humanitarian objective of the Treaty. This has been reflected by our activities in engaging itself in all international and regional undertakings to ban landmines, despite the fact that the country is not yet a state party to this Treaty. We also confirmed that our firmed decision to accede to this convention has been made since 2004 and since then preparations and efforts have been made in order to allow us to meet all obligations stated therein. Since 2007 onwards, we have changed our position and have voted in favour of the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly on Implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. Further steps have been undertaken in line with our decision to make voluntary transparency report pursuant to Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention. We are now in the process of preparing the draft report. This will help the international community understand deeper the facts and reality on the ground as well as the desire and the intention of the Lao PDR toward the goal and aspiration of this 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.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, let me avail myself of 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 outlined in the National Strategy on UXO.

Thank you.