



Lao PDR has great opportunity for leadership in regional mine ban efforts; urged to accede to the treaty

Vientiane, Geneva, Amman 25 October 2019 – In sign of its rapprochement towards adopting a ban against anti-personnel mines, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Labour and Social Welfare and the Prime Minister of Lao PDR said Laos is closely considering adopting the convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. The comments came during a three-day visit to Lao PDR by the Special Envoy of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan who has been given the mandate to promote the anti-landmine treaty among states that have not yet joined.

“I am extremely encouraged by the welcoming that my delegation and I have received and for the encouraging news that Laos is closely considering acceding to this landmark instrument,” said the Special Envoy as he wrapped up a three-day visit to Laos supported by the European Union to promote the treaty and its norms.

“There is a perception that joining the Mine Ban Convention will somehow divert Laos from pursuing its UXO-free ambition; however, we see it as a well-timed opportunity for Laos to address these scourges in a concerted manner with the support of the international community,” added the Envoy.

In a visit to a clearance site in the Louang Prabang Province Prince Mired commended the work of the National Unexploded Ordnance Programme under the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector (NRA). “We are highly impressed by the level of its clearance operations and readiness of national authorities to work with civilian demining organisations in close cooperation with donor countries.”

“As it relates to assisting the many victims of explosive remnants of war, the Mine Ban Convention has established firm linkages with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The fact that Laos is now party to the CRPD is an opportunity to coordinate efforts under these two instruments. This could assist Laos in furthering the significant development and progress it has achieved over the past two decades, thus not only benefiting UXO victims but all other persons with disabilities,” added the Envoy.

“Laos has an opportunity for leadership in the South East Asia region which remains underrepresented. We in Jordan know firsthand what this entails. I have expressed my unwavering support to the leaders of this great nation to count with my humble support and that of those States that stand ready to support Laos as it strives to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals.”

Laos called to take concrete steps towards acceding to the Convention

“We encourage Lao PDR to show its steadfast support towards the Convention’s goals by taking a number of small but concrete steps. We have urged the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in its capacity as Chairman of the NRA, **to put in place an official moratorium on use and production of mines in line with Laos’ already-existing practice,**” said Mr Juan Carlos Ruan, Director of the Convention’s Secretariat.

“Since we have not received official state information since 2011, we have advised the NRA Chairman to consider providing **an updated voluntary transparency report with information on Lao PDR’s mine clearance and stockpiling situation, and its efforts to assist victims of mines and other unexploded ordnance.** We are delighted to learn that Laos aims to be represented at a high-political

level at the upcoming summit of the Convention, *the Oslo Review Conference on a Mine-Free World* taking place in Norway from 25-29 November. We welcome this high level participation and look forward to seeing Laos continue their engagement with the Convention,” added the Director.

Lao PDR leadership expressed that while Laos is *de facto* implementing the Convention, it will require additional support to properly address all treaty obligations including reporting and assistance to victims.

Press Note:

His Royal Highness met with Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Thongpane Savanphet; Minister of Defence H.E. Lt. Gen. Chansamone Chanyalath, and Director General Mr. Anouparb Vongnorkeo; Minister of Labour and Social Welfare H.E. Khampheng Saysompheng; and Prime Minister H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith. In addition the delegation met with Directors of the National Regulatory Authority on UXO/Mine Action Programme (NRA); and, the UXO-Lao (National Operator), and visited the Cooperative Orthotic & Prosthetic Enterprise COPE Centre which provides assistance to victims of explosive remnants of war.

During his visit, the Special Envoy also met with representatives of mine action donors Australia, European Union, Japan, Luxembourg, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America. In addition, the delegation met with development, universalization and victim assistance implementers Humanity and Inclusion, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Development Programme (UNDP); and international clearance operators HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA).