Statement by

Delegation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic
on Clearance at the 7th Meeting of the High Contracting
Parties to Protocol V
of CCW
11 November 2013, Geneva

Mr. Coordinator,

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao Delegation, I would like to express our thanks and appreciations for your tireless work and excellent report on clearance.

As you know Laos is one of the most affected countries by ERW. And ERW is one of the main obstacles for the socio-economic development in my country, particularly in the country side and remote areas. Therefore the Government has given priority to clearance of ERW that will allow people to access the land they needed for agriculture and other purposes. In this regard, let me share some of the progress made on the clearance work in my country. Currently, there are seven humanitarian clearance operators working in Laos, namely Handicap International Belgium, Japan Mine Action Service, UXO Lao, Mine Advisory Group, Norwegian People’s Aid, Solidarity Service International and HALO Trust - a new operator that has just begun its operation in a southern province in Laos. Among these, UXO Lao is the biggest operator who is operating in 9 most affected provinces. Besides, there are seven commercial clearance operators that clear contaminated land for commercial purposes. Currently, there are around 3,512 clearance personnel working full time in Laos and among those 30% are female.
Since 1996 to August 2013 the UXO Sector in Lao PDR cleared over 40,000 hectares of contaminated land of which 29,600 ha for agriculture and 10,400 ha for development and destroyed over 1.3 million items of UXO and ERW. From January to September 2013, UXO clearance operators destroyed around 47,817 UXO and ERW of which 145 are big bombs, 27,888 are cluster sub-munitions, 29 are landmines and 19,755 are other UXO items.

Coordinator,

A comprehensive survey to identify the exact size and location of contaminated areas by ERW is required in Lao PDR. The Handicap International Impact Survey of 1997 was too general that could not tell exact location and size of the contamination and the result of the survey may not accurate. In this regard, we are searching for the most suitable method for the survey and we have been trying few pilot projects to help us determine which one is the most suitable. We have just concluded our workshop on the outcome of the pilot project last month. We have identified the new method which built on the district focus approach and tried by Norwegian People's Aid as the most suitable one. And we will submit it to the NRA board for consideration and if it is endorsed we will use it as a standard for the future survey and land release.

Apart from this, we are also trying to add strength to the existing clearance capacity. We are in the process of establishing a military demining operator for humanitarian purposes aimed at expanding the capacity on clearance. In this regard, let me express our profound gratitude to China for providing training to our 30 demining personnel and some detectors and equipments that are necessary for the operation of the military humanitarian demining unit. Let me also express our thanks and appreciations to the donor countries, international organizations and INGOs that have provided assistance to Laos in addressing UXO and ERW issues and we hope that your valuable assistance will be further continued.

I thank you for your kind attention.