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On Cooperation and Assistance at the Protocol V Meeting of Experts

Mr.

Mme. Coordinator,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Since I take the floor for the first time, I would like to joint previous speakers to congratulate you on your tireless efforts and excellent work on cooperation and assistance. May I also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the sponsorship programme extended to my delegation which facilitates my participation in this meeting.

Mr.

Mme. Coordinator,

Cooperation and assistance play crucial role for Member States to fulfill all the obligations under the Protocol, especially for the least developed country and most affected county like Lao PDR. ERW remains daunting challenges to our people and also a major obstacle to the socio-economic development. The Lao Government has intensifies all our efforts to release the land. The demand of land use is greater than the national capability and the clearance is not cheap and it required time.

Mr.

Mme. Coordinator,

Let me share with you the Government’s efforts to mobilize resources to deal with ERW and support that we have received: The Government has included the UXO issue in the five-year economic development plan and in collaboration with UNDP has adopted MDG 9 (Reduce impacts of the UXO) in Round Table Meeting 2010 which is a localized MDG specifically for Lao PDR to be achieved certain targets by 2020. The Round Table Meeting is good venue where donors and government will meet and discuss the annual socio-economic development plan and the UXO working group has been included. The progress and challenges, information about UXO issues and national strategic plan, funding situation and other related issues have been shared at annual meeting. The participants of the meeting are line Ministries, UN agencies, donor countries, UXO operator, INGOs working in Laos.

On the areas where international cooperation and assistance is required to deal with the ERW, I would like to share some information as follows:

Clearance for agriculture use and development purposes, reduce number of casualties and victim assistance are three main areas where cooperation and assistance is needed to reduce impacts of the UXO. The demand of land releases is far exceed the clearance capacity by all existing operators. Approximately all operators can clear 6,000 ha per year while the land uses need to be cleared 20,000 ha per year. The clearance is not cheap and it takes time. To address these challenges and constraints, huge resources including technology and knowhow are critical and it is way beyond national capacity. In addition, financial shortfall has limited number of clearance team, earmark funding is not
flexible enough to allow reallocation to cover unfunded areas where land releases are needed. Mine risk education proves to be effective as the number of victims has been dropped significantly from 99 in 2011 to 45 in 2014.


I would like now to turn on the issue of South-South cooperation. In 2014, UXO Lao staffs were trained on how to operate brush cutter in Cambodia. Recently, 20 staff are being trained how to operate brush cutter in two provinces. The UXO Lao also conducted and participated in UXO Lao-CMAC South-South Cooperation on Mine/UXO Action supported by JICA.

In conclusion, I would like, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, to express our deep thanks and sincere appreciation to all donor countries and international community including the INGOS for the continued support and assistance provided to the Lao PDR in addressing the daunting challenges. Recently, the Government of the People’s Republic of China has provided the grant to UXO sector with medical equipments and ambulance vehicle worth of 3 million yuan. The grant has been continued since 2012. We hope that the assistance will be further increased given the numerous unfinished tasks which need to be carried out. The Government reaffirms our strong commitment to continue working closely with all state parties and international community as a whole in fulfilling the obligations of the Protocol. I wish our deliberation a great success.

Thank you