Statement by Mr. Maythong Thammavongsa,
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on Cooperation and Assistance at the Protocol V Meeting of Experts
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Mr. Coordinator,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like join previous speakers to congratulate you on your tireless efforts and excellent work on cooperation and assistance.

Mr. Coordinator,

Cooperation and assistance is one of the key components should all of the obligations under the Protocol be met, especially for the least developed country and heavily affected country by ERW like Lao PDR. ERW constitutes a significant obstacle to the socio-economic development long after the conflict ended. Clearance proved very expensive and time-consuming. Victim assistance often lagged behind the fundamental need of the survivors.

ERW clearance and victim assistance has started in my country officially at mid 1990. We received valuable assistance from donor countries, international organizations and INGOs in addressing the UXO issue. Progress has been made, but due to the huge contaminated areas continued assistance from international community would be most welcome. We have announced that we plan to submit a request for assistance in the near future. In this connection, let me update on the progress we are preparing.

After an evaluation of the progress made in the UXO sector, it is found that the demand for land use is far exceed the clearance capacity by all existing operators combined. Currently all operators can clear about 6,000 ha per year and the need for land use is about 20,000 ha per year. Therefore, the Government has indentified the involvement of military to do humanitarian demining should add strength to the sector, and it could address the problem of sustainability when outside aid drying up. The pilot project has been started, but not yet fully functional. The NRA which will oversee the military unit for humanitarian demining is currently refining the detail project before submitting for assistant request in the near future.

I hope that the assistance will be forthcoming to assist Lao PDR to fulfill its obligations. May I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the valuable assistance provided to us from the international community.

I thank you for your kind attention.