



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Statement by
Ms. Phonenipha Mathouchanh
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During the Thematic Debate on "Conventional Weapons"
Before the First Committee of the 68th Session of the General Assembly
New York, 30 October 2013

Mr. Chairman,

The Lao Government supports the effort by the international community to address the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation in the world and this should be carried out under the principle of multilateral diplomacy. Today, arms race and nuclear proliferation continue to be a major threat to global peace and security. Amid regional conflicts and disputes as well as civil unrests occurring across various regions, the international community should redouble its effort to address the issue of armament. In this context, the Lao PDR would continue to work closely with other member states in addressing such global concern. To this end, the Lao PDR has already become state party to and implementing a number of international instruments on disarmament such as NPT, CTBT, CWC, CCW and its protocols as well as Convention on Cluster Munitions "CCM" and others.

Mr. Chairman,

Conventional weapon, though, does not have the same effect as weapon of mass destruction, it has the same impact and causes long term consequences. The Explosive Remnants of War "ERW" create humanitarian problems and inflict unacceptable harm on the civilians as well as pose serious obstacles to social and economic development of many nations.

The Lao PDR is a victim of ERW. During the Vietnam war, the use of conventional weapons, including cluster munitions through aerial bombing from 1964 to 1973, has left Laos with extensive contamination by about 270 million cluster sub-munitions known as Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Almost four decades after the war ended, these remnants of war continue to maim or kill almost 100 innocent people a year including women and children in the Lao PDR, who have nothing to do with the war or with such conventional weapons, but have to pay for the price. To date, 14 out of 17 provinces of Laos remain contaminated with UXO, especially cluster

munitions, approximately 80,000 square kilometres out of the 236,800 square kilometres of its territory.

In addition to their deadly humanitarian impact, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance are a major obstacle to our national development. They restrict safe access to valuable agricultural land and inhabit the building of schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure. Given the gravity of UXO contamination as it directly links to development and poverty eradication, the Government of the Lao PDR adopted a country-specific Millennium Development Goal known as MDG9, which aims specifically at addressing the impact of UXO on national development. Achieving MDG9 would require extensive support from the international community, and in this context, the Lao Government appreciates the continued support from those development partners, including the UN system and international organizations as well as our fellow developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

As one of the most affected nations by cluster munitions, the Lao PDR fully endorses the objective of achieving the total elimination of cluster munitions. To date, 83 countries are now state party and 112 countries are signatories to this Convention. Therefore, to ensure the universalization of this Convention and put an end to cluster munitions, we call upon those states, which are not yet state party to consider to do so and call upon all states to fully implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions for the benefit of humankind.

The Lao PDR remains committed to constructive engagement in the work of the First Committee.

I thank you.