



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Lao PDR among the first nations to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions

The United Nations today congratulated the Government of the Lao PDR on being one of the first 5 nations to ratify a new international treaty, at UN Headquarters in New York, that prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which opened for signature on 3 December 2008 in Oslo, Norway, remains open for signature and ratification in New York.

“We need to consign cluster munitions to the pages of history,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said in a message to the New York signing event. “We must step up our efforts so men, women and children can walk free of fear of the terrible injuries these munitions inflict.”

The March 18th event was organized at the United Nations to encourage further signatures and ratifications so the Convention will enter into force as soon as possible. The event was chaired by the director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, Mr. Max Kerley. Ambassador Atoki Ileka of the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed the Convention. Ambassador Kamika Phommachan of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic deposited their instruments of ratification. About 75 other countries were in attendance and a number indicated that their national ratification processes were nearly complete. H. E. Mr Duangchy Pichit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and Chairman of the National Regulatory Authority (NRA), has encouraged all governments to consider signing this treaty “to ensure no country will suffer as the Lao PDR continues to.”

The Lao PDR, as the state most affected by cluster munitions on a per capita basis, played a leading role in campaigning for this worldwide ban on their use, production, transfer and stockpiling. The CCM was adopted by 107 States at a conference in Dublin, Ireland in May 2008 and was first opened for signature in Oslo on 3 December 2008, where Lao PDR was the second country to sign after the host Norway. It has now been signed by 96 countries and five states have now ratified it. The CCM will enter into force six months after 30 States ratify it and deposit their “instruments of ratification” with the Secretary-General. In Oslo HE Mr Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, extended an invitation from the Government of the Lao PDR to host the first meeting of States Party to the Convention within one year of the Convention coming into force.

The United Nations continues its efforts worldwide to mitigate the dreadful humanitarian suffering caused by cluster munitions. In Lao PDR, UXO contamination impedes the socio-economic development of the country, and about 300 people, half of them children, are killed or injured each year in UXO accidents. The UN Country Team in Lao PDR assists the Government through continued support for the nationwide UXO strategy. This support encompasses funding and technical support for the national clearance operator UXO LAO for survey and clearance work, along with activities in risk education and reduction.

Notes for editors:

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The United Nations Country Team in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is committed to supporting the efforts of the Government to improve the life of all citizens, especially those most vulnerable. We shall continue to work closely with the Government and all development partners for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective endeavour is to assist the people of Lao PDR to achieve progress and better standards of living for all.