

Laos calls on int'l community to join forces against cluster munitions



Laos has affirmed its commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, while calling on countries the world over to also support the ban on the use of such devices.

A Lao delegation, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of International Organisations, the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR, UXO Lao, Permanent Representative Office to the United Nations, and international organisations in Laos, addressed the topic at the 8th meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from September 3-5.

The delegation told the meeting about Laos' priorities, namely the enforcement of the convention at international level, the surveillance, clearance and destruction of cluster munitions and risk education, victim assistance, mutual assistance, and implementation of the convention at national level.

"Our presence at this meeting indicates the political will and strong commitment of Laos in implementing the convention. Laos is the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world," a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated.

The Lao delegation told the meeting about the progress made in carrying out the country's obligations as a state party to the convention over the past year, especially in the removal of UXO, which continues to threaten people and is hindering socio-economic development.

The delegation also explained Laos' plan to further tackle UXO and call on the international community to increase cooperation and assistance to countries affected by such devices.

The words of the Lao delegation attracted the attention of many signatories to the convention, parties, donors, affected countries, and international organisations.

Lao officials called for all countries to sign and ratify the convention so that it was implemented worldwide.

The removal of unexploded ordnance is a top priority for Laos as it aims to fulfil the National Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 18) on living life safe from UXO.

Under the convention, Laos is a coordinator for the survey and clearance of UXO from 2017 to 2019 together with the Netherlands, which concludes its term this year. Sweden has expressed its intention to be Laos' next coordination partner in 2019.