

**Remarks by Alexandra Hiniker, Lao PDR Project Manager, Cluster Munition Coalition  
7 July 2010, Vientiane, Lao PDR**

Excellency Hiem Phommachanh, Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here today representing the Cluster Munition Coalition, or CMC, in Laos.

The CMC is an international civil society campaign working to globally ban cluster munitions and end the suffering they cause. We were founded in 2003 and we have around 400 member organizations in more than 95 countries around the world, including several here in Laos.

Our work in Laos is part of the CMC's global campaign to achieve three main objectives at the First Meeting of States Parties.

The first one is to have wide, active, and positive participation from States as well as civil society.

The second objective is to ensure that the meeting results in ambitious decisions by States Parties that will serve us all well in the future: a comprehensive and coordinated action plan – the so-called 'Vientiane Action Plan', a strong political declaration, well-thought-out reporting formats, and a clear program and structure for future diplomatic work on the Convention in 2011 and beyond.

The third overarching objective is to raise general awareness of the Convention, including both the suffering caused by cluster munitions and the determination to end it with a sustained commitment to the global ban on cluster munitions.

In each of the regional and international meetings throughout the Oslo process to ban cluster munitions, CMC members have worked with governments and international organizations like the United Nations and the Red Cross movement to achieve the common objective of a world free from the horrors of cluster munitions. It's in no small part due to this strong collaboration that 106 countries have signed the Convention, and that 37 countries have ratified – including stockpilers, producers, users, and affected countries.

The Lao government, organizations here in Laos, and Lao survivors themselves have played a crucial role in banning cluster bombs. No other country could have had the moral weight and influence that Laos had and continues to have as incoming Presidency host of the First Meeting of States Parties.

In October 2008, CMC members were given a warm welcome to contribute to the successful Southeast Asia Regional Meeting on the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Xiengkhuang. I was personally delighted to be able to participate in that meeting, where I understand the idea of Lao PDR hosting the First Meeting of States Parties was first discussed by senior officials. Based on the success of the regional conference, we are more than confident that the First Meeting of States Parties will be the best Meeting of States Parties possible.

One of the main reasons we are confident in this success is that the cooperative spirit that has been a hallmark of the Oslo Process continues here in Laos today, where we as CMC have been working in close partnership with the Lao government as well as international organizations, foreign embassies, and UN agencies to facilitate civil society participation and contributions in preparation of the First Meeting of States Parties.

Of course we each have a distinct role, but we all share one common objective, which is to make the First Meeting of States Parties a success.

Since I arrived in Laos last April, my days have been filled with meetings that spill over into evenings, weekends, and holidays, over breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. People are full of ideas and prepared to put in the time and energy to make them happen. We've come up with a great plan to build momentum from now until November involving people from all walks of life and representing all aspects of society.

At the same time, we have begun preparations for November by identifying hotels in Vientiane for several hundred civil society delegates from many different cultures and countries. But that's just the beginning. We are going to make sure there's media coverage, great exhibitions, interesting side events, catchy materials and strong, substantive statements at the conference.

At every single meeting throughout the Oslo process, people have spoken passionately about the devastation caused by cluster munitions – and at the First Meeting of States Parties, people will have an opportunity to see firsthand what they've been hearing about.

Within the movement to ban cluster munitions, everyone already knows that Laos is the most affected country in the world. But it's not all sad news. When delegates come to Laos this November, they'll also see the great work that's being done to end the suffering caused by these weapons. Our message should be that with the right resources, a clear focus, and sustained cooperation between civil society, governments and international organizations, we can solve this problem here in Laos and all around world.

Thank you.