The impact of UXO
Between 1964 and 1973, more than 2 million tons of explosive ordnance were dropped on Lao PDR. An enormous number of these failed to detonate at the time.

The vast majority of the bombs deployed over Lao PDR were cluster munitions, large bombs containing hundreds of cluster bomblets each - ‘bomblets’ as they are known locally. Around 270 million bomblets of this kind were dropped. Many millions of these ‘bomblets’ failed to explode at the time. It is estimated that there are still over 80 million bomblets scattered and buried all over the Lao countryside today. These bomblets continue to maim and kill an average of 300 men, women and children every year. Those who survive are often left with debilitating injuries.

15 out of the 17 provinces in the country are still contaminated with UXO to this day. A staggering one quarter of all villages in Lao PDR are affected by cluster munitions.

The Oslo Process and the First Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Cluster munitions were used extensively in the bombing campaign, and millions of ‘bomblets’ are believed to remain, unexploded, to this day.

An international movement to outlaw the use of cluster munitions, known as the Oslo process, began in February 2007 in Oslo, Norway.

A core group of countries, led by Norway, spearheaded the movement to ban the use of these weapons which continue to cause unacceptable harm long after the end of a conflict. The Oslo experience is indicative of the horrific nature of these weapons.

The Oslo process resulted in a momentous international treaty aimed at banning the use and stockpiling of cluster munitions by all states who agree to it, as well as offering assistance to victims of cluster bombs and international cooperation for those countries affected by these weapons. The Convention on Cluster Munitions was agreed and finalized in Dublin, Ireland in 2008. The first countries signed the treaty in December 2008 in Oslo.

The Oslo declaration, as it is known, has now been ratified by more than 30 countries. This means the treaty will become legally binding on 1 August 2010, 6 months after the 30th country agreed to its terms or ratified. The first meeting of States Parties to the convention will take place in November 2010 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

What will happen at the first meeting of States Parties?
The first meeting of States Parties is the first occasion for all those states who have agreed to ban the use of cluster munitions to discuss the most effective way to move forward with ensuring that the terms of the Convention are met.

At this landmark event, government officials from all over the world will convene in Vientiane to discuss how to ensure that the treaty is upheld by all those who have agreed to its terms. This is one of the most important events marking a significant movement towards justice for those states affected by cluster munitions.

The government of the Lao PDR is honoured to host such an historic event in its capital city. Further, Lao PDR will continue its commitment to eradicating the unacceptable weapons by pressing over the Oslo process in the lead up to the second meeting of States Parties, to be held in 2011.

The National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR (NRA)

NRA Office
The National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR is a public institution of the government of Lao PDR. It is responsible for providing policy direction, and managing and coordinating organizations working within the UXO/Mine Action sector. The NRA also serves as an accreditation body for national and international operators in Lao PDR, and is mandated to handle all matters to do with international conventions and treaties related to UXO/Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War.

NRA is divided into 2 sections:
1. Policy, Administration and Standards section
2. Operation section: composed of 3 units:
   - Mine Risk Education Unit
   - Clearance Unit
   - Victim Assistance Unit

Mine Risk Education Unit
The NRA is mandated to ensure the effective coordination, monitoring and regulation of Mine Risk Education activities across the UXO sector. The Mine Risk Education (MRE) Unit of the NRA is responsible for overseeing all MRE initiatives, by ensuring they adhere to national standards, are consistent and importantly, that they remain sensitive to local contexts. The MRE Unit also works to improve and develop additional MRE materials. In particular, the unit focuses on high risk groups such as farmers and scrap metal traders.

Clearance Unit
Based on UXO clearance and survey programmes, the NRA regulates all UXO/demining operators, coordinating and providing input into their planning processes and ensuring that they adhere to national standards. It is also responsible for technical training and monitoring pre-clearance processes and post-clearance impact.

Victim Assistance Unit
The NRA Victim Assistance Unit has developed a national database on UXO/Mine casualties and accidents, and keeps it continually updated with new information. The unit is responsible for ensuring that the specific needs of survivors of UXO/Mine accidents are addressed by the appropriate operators.