



Minutes
First UXO Sector Working Group Meeting 2022
16 September 2022

INTRODUCTION:

On 16 September 2022, at the International Cooperation and Training Centre, the NRA, with UNDP and the US Embassy organized the first Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) Sector Working Group (SWG) Meeting for 2022. The meeting was attended by members of the NRA board, foreign ambassadors, representatives from line ministries of the Lao government, UXO provincial authorities, UXO clearance operators, and staff from the NRA office. The total number of participants are 46 people.

The Sector Working Group Meeting on UXO/Mine Sector was chaired by Mr. Padeumphone Sonthany, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare and Deputy Chairperson of the NRA Board, Ms. Catherine Phuong, O.I.C. Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP and H.E. Peter M. Haymond, United States Ambassador to the Lao PDR.

SESSION 1: WELCOME AND OPENING SESSION:

Mr. PADEUMPHONE SONTHANY, DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NRA BOARD

- Mr. Padeumphone greeted attendees and stated his delight to represent the NRA and the Government of Laos, as well as to chair the session with UNDP and the US Embassy.
- In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the UXO SWG, two meetings with donor countries per year have been scheduled, and this was the first meeting in 2022.
- SWG is an important event and meeting to eliminate poverty and to implement Sustainable Development Goal 18 (SDG 18), and the National Strategic Plan for the UXO sector entitled "Safe Path Forward III (SPF III)" for 2021-2030 and decrees on the management of UXO & implementation of CCM.
- Over the past 9 months, the UXO sector has carried out multiple tasks to support UXO operations at various levels on a regular basis, including UXO Explosive Ordinance Risk Education (EORE), Victim Assistance (VA), Survey and Clearance, Quality Management (QM), improving the Information Management (IM), Teaching and learning curriculum, and coordination to facilitate the MoU process. Furthermore, the Sector has successfully improved the visibility of UXO implementation and promoted awareness of UXO issues in the Lao PDR within the country and overseas. Despite these accomplishments, there have been challenges and obstacles to the implementation of UXO sector activities

associated with economic and social constraints of the Lao PDR. For example, a lack of funding resulted in the suspension of UXO operations in some provinces and resulted in an increased number of UXO accidents and casualties. These challenges have hindered the Lao Government and development partners from achieving sustainable development goals in the Lao PDR.

CATHERINE PHUONG, UNDP O.I.C. DEPUTY RESIDENT ~~OF~~ REPRESENTATIVE TO LAO PDR

- Ms. Catherine Phuong thanked the Lao government for milestone outputs and survey and clearance data in 2021, which proved to be the most productive year on record. Furthermore, she congratulated the first-time review of the situation of persons with disabilities in Lao PDR, which included UXO survivors, by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in August 2022 in Geneva.
- She also emphasized the importance of strengthening the efficacy and effectiveness of the UXO implementations in order to meet our agreed-upon aims of Safe Path Forward III and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- She highlighted the need for greater integration of UXO sector activities with national development planning to maximize the impacts of UXO clearance and survey on affected communities, and also to attract potential donors and mobilize funds. The UN called for the completion of the National Prioritization System to be expedited so that UXO operations will always support development efforts.
- UNDP also called for fast tracking the revision of National Standards as the updated National Standards would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UXO implementations by having the best practices effectively disseminated across all operators. Ms Phuong pointed out that current standards are out of date, and as a result, the productivity of the operators has been compromised.
- Lastly, UNDP suggested improving the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process to enable longer term MOUs to be concluded with broader objectives linked to the SPF III outcomes and timeframe. Improving the MOU process would invite more investment to the sector while maximizing impact.

H.E. PETER HAYMOND, AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES TO LAO PDR

- Ambassador Haymond thanked the NRA for organizing consultations with the operators and other stakeholders.
- The U.S. Ambassador congratulated the Lao Government's approval of the National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector 2021-2030 "Safe Path Forward III". This is an important reference for the UXO Sector to make the most productive use of resources during this decade of action. The US Embassy looks forward to joining discussions with the NRA and other UXO stakeholders on concrete steps to implement the National Strategic Plan.
- U.S. funding for the UXO sector has supported the proactive survey efforts, and we have completed the survey projects in four out of six high priority provinces, namely, Attapeu, Sekong, Salavan and Savannakhet provinces with applying the systematic village-by-village approach. In Xiengkhouang province, MAG's systematic village-by-village survey efforts will continue

- Unfortunately, the survey process in Xiengkhouang will take longer time than in other provinces due to the density of the UXO contamination. The U.S. government has provided funds for NPA so that they can conduct a more comprehensive survey of Champasak province, in 54 additional villages, to be concluded in 2023.
- There is no doubt that we will continue to find new evidence points that will require investigation through Technical Survey and so U.S.-funded implementing partners will keep a residual survey capacity even after the end of their survey projects. Those teams will be available to respond reactively to conduct survey when needed.
- In 2021, we started to focus our combined resources on more efficient clearance of areas prioritized under Lao PDR's development plan. The survey results have enabled better targeted clearance, and will continue to do so in the remainder of 2022 and 2023. This is done by converting survey teams to clearance teams, and by recruiting and training new field staff for the additional clearance teams.
- Despite the challenges last year of Covid-19, the NRA statistics show that humanitarian clearance operations cleared more land in 2021 than in previous years. We expect that this statistic will increase again in 2022. The United States will continue to support an expansion of clearance capacity in line with the approved SPF III in 2023.
- New grants were awarded to the U.S. government's implementing partners (IPs) including UXO Lao and three INGOs (MAG, HALO Trust and NPA) to enable IPs to recruit and train additional teams and equip them with the required tools. Accordingly, a total of 43 new clearance teams will be deployed. in addition to the existing 213 technical survey and area clearance teams.
- The U.S. government expected that with U.S.-funded programmes, 5,000 hectares of the confirmed hazardous areas (CHA) would be cleared in 2023 and 6,000 hectares of the CHA would be cleared in 2024.
- Provided that the budget system of the U.S. now allows finalizing MOU for 2 years, Ambassador Haymond proposed that the duration of the MOU shall be extended to 2 years instead of 1 year to improve the efficiency of UXO implementation.
- The U.S. will continue to support ongoing UXO education to help avoid accidents and continue to provide assistance to UXO survivors.
- The U.S. Embassy welcomes the opportunity to discuss further potential support to Unit 58 for training, equipment, and facilities improvement. Ambassador Haymond also called for training more Lao staff at the highest level (Level 4) to further increase clearance capacity – and safety. The U.S. Embassy is ready to consider NRA's request for support to this initiative.
- The United States hopes to maintain current levels of U.S. funding to the UXO Sector, but cannot guarantee that in advance. Future funding will depend on effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the implementation of survey and clearance operations.

SESSION 2: CHAIRED BY H.E. PETER HAYMOND, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IN LAO PDR

Presentation by Director General (DG) of the NRA – Mr. Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat

- **He highlighted the key achievements of the first 9 months of 2022 on behalf of the whole sector, which included:**
 - 25 people have been supported through the NRA Victim Assistance program.
 - EORE activities were conducted in 513 villages.

- Non-technical surveys were conducted in 116 villages, and technical surveys to identified 11.503 Ha of CHA.
- Approximately 3,060 Ha was cleared of UXO.
- 53,484 items of UXO (bombs) were destroyed.
- **Additionally, the following activities were conducted:**
 - The National UXO Sector's ten-year Strategic Plan, SPF III, was endorsed by the Government in July 2022.
 - The National Decree on UXO management was endorsed in July 2022.
 - Work on the National Prioritization System was initiated (district training, consultation workshop with line ministries).
 - Agreements/MOUs have been signed with UXO operators.
 - Technical working groups in EORE, VA, CL and IM were conducted.
 - The 2021 UXO Sector Annual Report has been finalized and is now available on the NRA website
 - Advocacy and public relations on CCM and UXO issues on 4th April, 1st August, and during the Lao PDR report to the 10th MSP of the CCM was conducted in the form of a brochure, UXO songs, etc.
 - The NRA participated in regional and international conferences in 2022 and shared Lao PDR's achievements and challenges (e.g. CCM, NDM, regional meetings, ARMAC).
 - Conducted dissemination workshops on the SPF III and National Decree on Regulatory for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR (210/GoL) for provincial regulatory authorities (PRAs).
 - Reviewed UXO curriculum and conducted the training.
 - Conducted Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Control (QC) for the clearance activities.
 - Conducted a Technical Working Group meeting for UXO operators on Information Management (IM) and discussed ways to improve accuracy in NRA's IM activities.
- **Some of the challenges faced in the 9 months of 2022 included:**
 - UXO accidents during the past 9 months, resulted in 13 injured and 2 dead.
 - Insufficient funding for planned activities.
 - National Survey still underway.
 - Annual targets for survey and clearance have not been met.
 - Inconsistent MOU compliance of the UXO operators.
 - Continuation and increase of UXO accidents and casualties in 2022.
- **DG also presented the activities for the last 3 months of 2022. Some of the key activities include:**
 - EORE in 141 villages.
 - Area clearance of 6,937 ha
 - Conducting Non-Technical Survey to identify CHA of 13,497 ha
 - Quality Management for UXO implementation including QA/QC and IM
 - Dissemination of new UXO National Strategic Plan "SPF III" (2021-2030)
 - Dissemination of National Decree on Regulatory for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR (Gov/210).
 - Restructuring of the NRA Board, PRA board, and District board and Set-up the UXO village network based on the Government Decree.

- Establishment of National Prioritization System.
- Renewal/update of National Standards
- Development of mid- to long-term UXO Sector Plans to support SPF III.
- Dissemination of Government Decree on Regulatory for UXO/Mine action.
- Improving the UXO National Training Center.
- Conducting operational cost analysis (Team)
- Conducting Knowledge, Attitude, Practice (KAP) survey.
- Integration of UXO work into relevant development activities.
- Development of annual UXO Sector work plans for 2023.

Discussion:

- **Mr. Vilatsone Visonavong, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs:**
 - US funding to support the UXO sector is still in the short term. He proposed to the US provide long-term financing. In addition, he also said that since Lao PDR is in the process of extending the period of clearance (1st August 2020-1st August 2025) under Article 4 of the CCM, it is noted that so far Lao PDR has not been able to send the work plan and the progress monitoring plan in the implementation of the article to the committee. The large amount of UXO in Laos and the spread of Covid-19 in the past caused the survey and clearance of the UXO out intermittently, so it is seen that Lao PDR needs to propose an extension of the implementation period of Article 4 and inform the 12th Summit of States Parties in 2024 that Lao will extend the time. Therefore, we should now prepare a joint plan to prepare a detailed exploration, recovery, and financing plans to monitor progress and report to the international community each year.
- **Ms. Natthanun Patcharapunchai, Development Programme Coordinator, New Zealand Embassy in Bangkok:**
 - She raised a question on the difference between National prioritization System and National Standard
 - Mr. Chomyaeng responded that the establishment of the National Prioritization System and the renewal of the National Standards are two different things, although the two are closely linked with each other. Currently, data is being collected to build the National Prioritization System and to renew National Standards. Development partners will soon be informed about the updates.
- **Mr. Olivier Bauduin, UXO Program Advisor, US Embassy:**
 - He emphasized that based on current capacity and resources, the sector can clear roughly 5,000 hectares per year. However, according to the National Strategic Plan (SPF III) and the National Social Economic Deployment Plan (NSEDP), the annual goal for the clearance of CHA is 10,000 Ha per year. The UXO Sector in Lao PDR is expanding its clearance capacity, and given the U.S.-funded initiative, we are going in the right direction to be closer to achieve this goal, taking into account the outputs funded by other donors. The sector must collaborate to create a thorough strategy to achieve our objectives.

SESSION 3: CHAIRED BY H.E. PADEUMPHONE SONTHANY, DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NRA BOARD

Presentation by the Director General of the NRA – Mr. Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat on progress made in the implementation of UXO activities as per recommendations:

- **He presented the recommendations and issues from the last UXO Sector Working Group Meeting on 11 November 2021:**
- Finalization and launch of SPF III: dissemination of SPF III is ongoing and the implementation plan will soon be developed in coordination with line ministries and development partners.
- Financial strategy for implementation of the ten-year strategic plan: A concept paper was to be prepared but was suspended for technical reasons including the impact of COVID-19.
- Integration of UXO issues into national economic development.
- Decree on Regulatory for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR: The decree promotes the compliance with CCM and it shall function as the reference for international and local stakeholders in the UXO sector when they are conducting UXO implementation.
- Time management in negotiation and extension of MOU with UXO operators: with the guidance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), meeting with operators will be arranged to help operators study MoU issues and the reasons for delay in approval so that the rate of MoU approval can be improved.
- Capacity-building of UXO operators, including the Lao Army's humanitarian teams (Unit 58) and provincial and district-level UXO operators are taking place in a regular basis.
- Training on UXO information management to avoid overlapping data collection and clearance tasks: NRA recognizes the need for capacity building of IM staff from the UXO sector that invites not only the national-level staff but also for the provincial and district level staff.
- Limited quality management of UXO survey and clearance: the Sector is working on improving the quality management.
- Re-evaluation of EORE and KAP Survey: Behaviour change plan for EORE will be developed based on a contextualised understanding of the UXO-affected communities obtained from the planned KAP survey
- **DG also presented the vision, goal and target of the SPF III (2021-2030) and the overview of the National Decree (210/GoL).**
- He highlighted that NRA is currently committed to disseminate the messages of two important documents, SPF III and the National Decree on UXO/Mine Action in the Lao PDR at the local level. He also underlined that all UXO operators shall consider these documents as the reference for UXO activities in the Lao PDR.

Discussion:

- **Mr. Vilatsone Visonavong, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Organizations, MoFA:**
- He agreed that the currently approved goal for the UXO clearance mentioned in both the SPF III and 9th NSEDP, 10,000 ha per year, shall be accomplished. In that vein, he

insisted that development partners and UXO operators should collaborate closely in order to complete this yearly plan on time. He highlighted that results-based management of the UXO implementation is required.

- He also maintained that the conclusion of the High-level Round Table Meeting shall be respected and complied with. We should work together with UNDP on the topic, theme, and agenda development of Round Table Meeting (RTM).
- **Ms. Minyoung Kim, Head of UXO Unit from UNDP:**
 - Given the gap between the national target for clearance (10,000 hectares per year) and current capacity of the clearance (5,000 hectares per year), the UXO sector should expedite UXO sector implementation. However, merely pushing UXO operators to clear more land per year is not the best approach. Our goals for the coming years can be achieved with collective attempts for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of UXO implementation via pertinent and timely renewal of National Standards and the development of the National Prioritization System. In this regard, she asked the timeline when the NRA is expecting to complete those plans.
 - Mr. Chomyaeng answered, "We will strive to finish the National Prioritization System within this year (2022)." Furthermore, he added that "We, NRA, have already carried out several activities to complete those tasks this year. Soon, these two documents will be developed and renewed and incorporated into both the National Strategic Plan and the National Decree."
- **Mr. Olivier Bauduin, UXO Program Advisor, US Embassy:**
 - The National Prioritization system is still under development and critical areas still need to be finalized. The National Standards consists of 24 chapters covering all aspects of the UXO sector. Once National Prioritization is finalized, then it shall be integrated into the National Standard.
- **Mr. Simon Rae, Tetra-Tech: Tetra-Tech (TT)** has collaborated closely with the NRA. However, there are several difficulties facing UXO sector activity implementation in the Lao context. For example, UXO operators are currently abiding by their own procedures and interacting with provincial offices only on an arbitrary basis in the absence of a National Prioritisation System. It is critical for all UXO operators to follow the National Prioritization System consistently. The NRA, on the other hand, has held a prioritization workshop. TT believes that by mid-2023 NRA will begin implementation of the SPF III and we will soon see significant changes.
- There was a discussion regarding the need for senior explosive ordnance disposal (SEOD) training to facilitate achievement of the national target for the UXO clearance. Currently, there are insufficient staff trained for SEOD (level 4) in UXO operations. As a result, the UXO Sector should focus more on developing an action plan and a training plan for SEOD.
- Mr. Chomyaeng replied, the training for SEOD is on the schedule, but we must first agree on the concept of a program. We have made some progress in the past following discussions with the team; we would want to cooperate with the UXO operators, but we have not reached an agreement on the implementation procedures. We should devise a suitable strategy.

▪ **Mr. Rupert Leighton, Chief Technical Advisor from UNDP:**

- Adding to previous comments, he explained how prioritization is linked with achieving the target. Pushing operators to go quicker is unacceptable and undesirable considering its implications on the safety and security of UXO operators and affected communities. Structure and prioritization are needed for all sectors to embrace the new National Standards. Moreover, currently, each operator has its own prioritization system, and some of them may be inconsistent with the 9th NSEDP. As a result, using the National Standards as the reference for UXO implementation and as a link to the prioritization plan would improve the productivity of UXO sector activity implementation.

SESSION 4: CHAIRED BY Ms. Catherine Phuong, O.I.C. Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP

Presentation by Ms. Minyoung Kim, Head of UXO Unit, UNDP:

▪ **Financing UXO clearance to achieve SDG 18**

- Targets to achieve SDG 18: focus will be given to the clearance target, only 1% of identified CHA has been cleared.
- The national target is highly ambitious given the current capacity.
- SPF III's target for the survey is 25,000 Ha, which is more realistic. However, the 9th NSEDP's target is different, at 50,000 Ha.
- To achieve SDG 18, SPF III, and 9th NSEDP, the targets should be either adjusted considering current capacity or the implementation process needs to be accelerated.
- The cost to clear 1 Ha is around 8,000 US dollars based on the rough calculation from the available data from UXO sector annual reports. However, Lao PDR has secured around 40 million US dollars per year, which indicates a funding gap to achieve the agreed targets.
- The National Prioritization System should be established as soon as possible. The resources also can be invested in high-return activities (e.g. prioritization of current funding and clearance capacity).
- Pooled funds or gap funding can be considered as an alternative, especially for the projects where the funding is suspended for new funding approval.
- Acknowledging UXO issues in the country and integrating UXO sector activities into local development planning and budgeting is required.

Presentation by Mr. Rupert Leighton, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP:

▪ **Discussion points: Financing the sector through and beyond SPF III**

- **Current financing:** we use \$40 million dollars per year to implement the UXO work and achieve SGD 18 in 2030. So, what is the plan after that? What is the vision? The financial management under the Lao government.
- **Problems with the current model:** Lack of diversification in funding sources is making the sector vulnerable. The current funding model is dependent on external foreign policy, not aligned with SPF III, and unsustainable in terms of the Lao PDR government budget.
- **Trend:** Institutional funding decline; there is still not enough funding diversity which makes the sector's performance weak, and Lao PDR still relies on foreign policies to raise funds.
- **Alternative financing model:** Currently, funding is beginning to decrease and there is a possibility that in the future, funding may further decline due to multiple factors including the completion of Mine Ban Treaty extensions in 2025 by Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand which will likely lead to a significant downturn in institutional funding in the region. Discussions in the sector around all reasonable efforts and residual risk management. What does the donor landscape look like in 10 years' time?
- **Management and anticipation of a reduction in institutional funding:** The sector needs to anticipate a reduction in institutional funding and consider moving from proactive clearance to a reactive EOD modality. If institutional funding declines sharply, the sector must prioritize actions and ask what components are essential in providing services to impacted communities. What options are available to diversify funding sources? Are there avenues to explore with commercial engagement?
- **How to transition:** 1) Political will and acknowledgment, 2) Increase in risk appetite especially regarding alternative financing models, 3) Engagement with the commercial sector and 4) National vision of long-term reactive EOD services to impacted communities.

Discussion:

- **Ms. Catherine Phuong, O.I.C. Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP:**
 - UNDP's role in development and management of sustainable UXO implementations: UNDP is here to provide institutional support to the leadership of the UXO sector; currently, the fundamental concern of the sector is financing for development to implement NSEDP and/or sector-level plans. Given that the UXO sector is almost entirely dependent on Official Development Assistance (ODA), the UXO sector shall drill into the detail.
- **Mr. Olivier Bauduin, UXO Program Advisor, US Embassy:**
 - Presentation of the required length of UXO clearance operations (1,500 years) is not so attractive for potential donors. In public relations for the sector, we would better use the information gathered from the survey and consolidated in the NRA national database, for

example, 'More than 160,000 hectares of CHAs have been identified', and this number will continue to grow with ongoing survey operations. We should use more attractive presentations for the potential donors, including dynamic management of the existing CHAs. All in all, using a year-by-year report demonstrating the progress made will be much more appealing to the donors.

▪ **Mr. Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat, Director General, NRA.**

- The presented concerns can be used as the basis for further study, and discussion on the implementation plan. But we need to discuss more on the financial strategies.
- Regarding the sector's effectiveness and efficiency, particularly the inability to achieve the clearance target, Mr. Chomyaeng proposed revising priorities and the budget in light of the SPF III aim. To comply with National Standards and CCM, we must collaborate more closely with local government authorities. That is to say, there are room for improvement in the capacity of UXO operators in working and coordinating fluently with local authorities.
- To avoid complex/overlapping activities, UXO operators shall work closely with the provincial authorities.

▪ **Ms Rebecca Letven, Country Director, MAG:**

- Improved efficiency and effectiveness in sector outputs, from the operator's perspective, allows operators to maintain safety and standards. The National Standard is an excellent chance to implement tiny modifications that will result in increased productivity. Funding and memorandums of understanding are one approach to enhance the effectiveness and efficacy of UXO initiatives. MOUs should not be limited to one year in order for donors to quickly offer further financing to Lao's UXO sector.

▪ **Mr. Reinier Carabain, Country Director, HI:**

- There are several impacting factors for UXO clearance such as geographical condition, vegetation density, level of contamination, weather and climate change. All these factors need to be considered to increase the clearance speed.
- There are limited staff of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) level 4. Currently, the highest level of staff that HI is working with is EOD level 3. HI will wait to see a new curriculum for SEOD (or EOD level 4) implemented by 2023.
- In the past, we worked closely with UXO Lao in Huaphan province. However, they are no longer there, which limits our work in those areas. Can we go beyond the MOU?

▪ **Mr. Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat, Director General, NRA:**

- To implement the UXO work, HI should work closely with PRA or DRA. Therefore, for the roving or emergency response, I would suggest for HI to coordinate with other UXO

operators who are near the identified areas. This is the good news that HI and other operators have cooperated closely with each other.

CLOSING REMARKS

H.E. Peter Haymond, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy in Lao PDR.

- We found that the stakeholders of the UXO sector share the same goal. The US government is looking for ways to carry out UXO sector activities efficiently and effectively and support the Lao government to achieve SDGs, including SDG 18. The sector shall prioritize increasing productivity in UXO sector activity implementation along with implementation of the pertinent strategic plans.
- The U.S. Ambassador recommended the Lao government to speed up updating the national standards because it is outdated, and the task has been pending for a long time. Moreover, details of the National Prioritization System shall be developed. Currently, the UXO operators are using different prioritization plans.
- With the extension period of the memorandum of understanding (MOU): the donor country is interested in extending it for the long term rather than from year to year. This will make the allocation of funds and operational plans in Lao PDR more convenient and save time for both parties.
- Regarding Unit 58 staff training: for the EOD staff, we should have a system and safety standards in training, create a detailed plan for the trainees to learn and to perform in their work.
- In conclusion, the U.S. Ambassador highlighted the need to have the best use of existing resources, we have to maximize the benefits. The donors have to make the case to their capitals, and it helps by demonstrating that the resources are well used. This will help donor countries to see the value in providing funds to this sector, in order to help more people in the future.

Ms. Catherine Phuong, O.I.C. Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP:

- 2030 is the deadline for SDG 18. However, we live in a world of increasing uncertainty, especially regarding the funding to the UXO sector in Lao PDR.
- We should create a survey and clearance plan that contributes to socio-economic development of the country. To do so, the determination of the national and local level plans for UXO sector activities should be guided by the National Prioritization System that goes along with the annual priority plan for the socio-economic development.
- Accordingly, what the UXO sector would expect to see in the near future is a clear and detailed plans to implement the national priorities in development and strategies for UXO sector activities that includes financing strategies, human resources development plans, and updated the National Standards.
- There are still important challenges, especially in the long-term management of the UXO sector. These include finding alternative financing strategies, building capacities of the UXO operators, and gradually increasing the contribution of the Lao government to the UXO sector.
- We hope to work together at the next meeting.

Mr. Padeumphone Sonthany, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare and Deputy Chairperson of the NRA Board

- Based on Mr. Chomyaeng's presentation, we unanimously agreed that we have common targets and goals to achieve in UXO sector activities. We should focus on the implementation of the plans to achieve these goals.
- We will work hard to disseminate the SPF III so that UXO operators at all levels (national, provincial, district levels) closely abide by the plans uniformly.
- We will build the capacity of our colleagues within the UXO sector.
- We will create a National Prioritization System to help ensure that UXO sector activities contribute to the socio-economic development plan.
- We will discuss further to facilitate the procedure for renewing MOUs, especially regarding time management.
- We will maintain the quality of the implementation and activity for survey and clearance.
- The Deputy Minister expressed his sincere thanks to his co-chairs for their excellent work and expressed the hope that there would be more financial support from development partners, international organizations, and the private sector to support the UXO sector.

End

H.E. MR. PADEUMPHONE SONTHANY, VICE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE, STANDING VICE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NRA BOARD



Mr.Padeumphone SONTHANY

Signature _____

Date _____

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MS. CATHERINE PHUONG, UNDP DEPUTY RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO LAO PDR



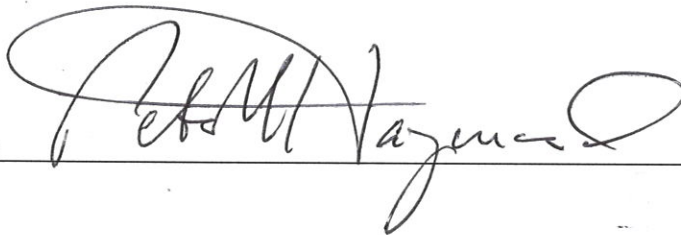
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20 JAN 2023

Catherine Phuong
Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP

H.E. Peter Haymond, Ambassador, US Embassy in Lao PDR



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