Delegation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic on Victim Assistance to the 9th Meeting of the High Contacting Parties to Protocol V of CCW, 9-10 November 2015, Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. Coordinator,

Lao PDR wishes to express our sincere gratitude for your excellent work that you have done as the Victim Assistance coordinator.

Victim Assistance is a priority for the Lao government. ERW survivors have been provided with medical care, Physical rehabilitation, Social and economic inclusion and Psycho Social Care.

In 2015, until November, 38 victims were reported from 24 registered accidents, of which there were 29 Injured and 9 people were killed. Most of the victims were boys. The two main causes of these accidents are making fire and playing with ERW.

In February 2014 the Government approved a new Victim Assistance strategy up to 2020 in order to achieve the goals specified in MDG9. Moreover, profiles of 8,581 survivors were entered into the Information Management System for Mine Action database and have been used by various Non-Governmental organizations. We have assessed the needs of ERW survivors, but the essential step is ensuring that these needs are addressed in compliance with our UXO Sector Strategy “Safe Path Forward II”, MDG9, Article 5 of the CCM and CCW Protocol 5.

Laos acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 but it is only the beginning to institute changes. In April 2014, the Lao government adopted a decree on disability, and throughout 2015 a strategic plan is under development for implementation of this decree in the broader disability sector.

Regular coordination of the Victim Assistance Sector has occurred through quarterly Technical Working Group meetings and various awareness raising activities.

Mr. Coordinator,

In coming years, Lao PDR will have many challenges to address the Victim Assistance needs:

First: Improve coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders, in order to reach the aims of SPF II. This includes various Government agencies and international community where disability support, we must admit, continues to be much less than needed.

Second: Limited resources for Victim Assistance; very few operators and donors take victim assistance as their main priority.
Third: Most of the survivors and the family members of those who died caused by UXO and ERW accidents live in rural and remote areas. It is therefore hard for them to access services, and to collect information on their needs.

Mr. Coordinator,

Lao PDR has a long way to go to fully achieve the Victim Assistance goals within the broader disability and development frameworks. Due to this situation we still need significant support from International Community. We wish to improve the quality of lives of persons with disabilities including thousands of UXO and ERW victims in Laos.

Thank you for your kind attention.