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**REGIONAL FORUM ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS
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Intervention on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme

Delivered by

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you for the opportunity to address this Regional Forum on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the occasion of the Regional Conference on Cluster Munitions hosted by Costa Rica. Our congratulations and gratitude towards the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) and its partner in Costa Rica, ARIAS, for organizing this event and the excellent work of NGOs in raising public awareness about the impact of cluster munitions. Civil society is again playing an invaluable role in raising concerns and demanding governments and the international community to urgently take action on concerns affecting the safety and security of civilians.

The UN has likewise, on numerous occasions, appealed to the international community to address the inhumane effects of cluster munitions. Following the Oslo meeting in February 2007, the new Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, said he was encouraged by the Oslo Declaration which envisages the conclusion in 2008 of a new agreement banning cluster munitions causing harm to civilians. On 4th April 2007 the UN Secretary General reiterated his call on the international community to address immediately the horrendous humanitarian effects of cluster munitions.ⁱ He referred to the efforts of a large group of countries to pursue a new international treaty to deal with these weapons, he encouraged all endeavours to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the impact of cluster munitions.

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UNDP, as well as other UN agencies, are here to give concrete support to these appeals.

As many of you will be aware, UNDP has a global mandate to work with national authorities to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the countries where we work. However, in affected countries, our work towards this goal is hampered by the impact caused by cluster munitions. UNDP has a global presence in 166 countries and territories, of which at least 29 are currently affected by cluster munitions.ⁱⁱ Thus, UNDP has first-hand experience of both the short-term humanitarian as well as the longer term development impact that these munitions have on populations and communities.

Few here today will need reminding about the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, including the immediate threat posed to civilians when such munitions with wide-area effects are used near or in populated areas. In our work, we have also witnessed the devastating consequences of cluster munitions that initially fail to explode, hence leaving behind large numbers of unexploded and unstable sub-munitions that continue to cause death and injury long after conflicts have ended, as well as preventing the productive use of contaminated lands threatening livelihoods in affected areas.

Globally, there are over 13,000 recorded and confirmed cluster munitions casualties, the vast majority of which are civilians injured or killed while carrying out their daily chores and income-generating activities in familiar places.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Laos, over 250 million cluster sub-munitions were delivered with an estimated failure rate of 26% in ideal conditions, leaving behind at least 75 million failed sub-munitions. More than 52.8 million sub-munitions fell within one kilometer of villages. Although often unreported, records show 4,837 casualties in Lao PDR alone. None of these known casualties were military personnel or deminers, but rather civilians including more than 1,900 children.^{iv} More than thirty years after the conflict, clearance operations are still on-going. The current Lao National Strategic Plan for the clearance of Unexploded Ordnance covers a ten-year period ending in 2013, however at the current UXO Lao clearance rate, it would take 3,600 years to deal with the cluster munitions still remaining in Lao PDR.^v

In Lebanon, the use of inherently inaccurate cluster munitions and other munitions in close proximity to civilian populations resulted in approximately 1,200 Lebanese civilians being maimed or killed. This includes some 180 civilians injured and 23 killed by the effects of sub-munitions after the conflict ended. The unacceptably high failure rates associated with these weapons – certainly much higher than their producers claim – have resulted in more than a million unexploded bomblets lying hidden in fields, olive groves and gardens. This means that people are prevented from returning home or

farming their land. As of 31 May 2007, 904 individual locations of new cluster bomb strikes were confirmed totaling an area of more than 36.6 million square meters.^{vi} The presence of these munitions is effectively denying access to approximately one quarter of the usable arable land.

UNICEF has highlighted the terrible impact of cluster munitions on children.^{vii} The small size and curious shapes of sub-munitions make them particularly appealing to children. Handicap International has estimated that some 3,007 children have been killed and injured by cluster munitions. It is particularly harrowing to learn that children make up a high proportion of all casualties – estimated to account for some 50% in Kosovo and 36% of casualties in Afghanistan.^{viii} These child casualties were denied their basic rights to life and to enjoy a safe environment in which to grow, learn and play.

Returning to the longer-term developmental impacts, cluster munitions undermine food security through land denial and loss of livestock, and health and hygiene problems as a result of a lack of access to shelter, water and sanitation. In Iraq, a recently completed impact survey demonstrated that much of the contamination is around populated areas. A large portion of the communities in urban and rural areas depend on land to directly sustain their families and maintain their livelihoods. Many activities they engage in such as planting crops and grazing and trading in livestock have been halted, due to the contamination. This loss of livelihoods has resulted in losses in income generation for many families and thus increased poverty levels.

In other words, beyond the humanitarian impact, cluster munitions have the potential to exacerbate poverty, and to block local and national economic recovery and long-term development, thereby impeding states' abilities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recognition of the humanitarian and development impacts of these weapons, UNDP and other UN agencies believe that it is time for the international community to urgently agree an effective legal instrument to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The humanitarian and developmental imperative demands that such a legal instrument be of the highest standards possible and be developed in the shortest time feasible.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's call on the international community in April 2007 to address immediately the horrendous humanitarian effects of cluster munitions, and to encourage all endeavours to reduce and ultimately eliminate the impact of cluster munitions on civilians. We hope that states here in Costa Rica will take up this challenge and ensure that a treaty can be concluded in 2008 in order to prevent any further human suffering.

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In the meantime, and until such time as a treaty is adopted, we would like to encourage all States to immediately freeze the production, use and transfer of all cluster munitions.

Thank you.

ⁱ Secretary-General's message on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, 4 April 2007.

ⁱⁱ The Handicap International report "Circle of Impact" released in May 2007 reported on 25 countries and territories affected by cluster munitions. However, further research has increased the number of countries and territories reported with cluster munitions contamination.

ⁱⁱⁱ Handicap International (May 2007) Circle of Impact: The Fatal Footprint of Cluster Munitions on People and Communities, Brussels, HI, page 136.

^{iv} Handicap International (May 2007) Circle of Impact: The Fatal Footprint of Cluster Munitions on People and Communities, Brussels, HI, page 30.

^v Statement by Mr. Tim Horner, UNDP Senior Technical Advisor to the UXO National Regulatory Authority Laos, to the Group of Governmental Experts, CCW, 20 June 2007.

^{vi} Statistics collated by the UNMAS implemented mine action programme in South Lebanon (<http://www.maccsl.org/reports>)

^{vii} Statement by Reuben McCarthy, UNICEF, at the occasion of the Civil Society Forum on Cluster Munitions, Oslo, 21 February 2007

^{viii} Circle of Impact: The Fatal Footprint of Cluster Munitions on People and Communities, Handicap International, May 2007