

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional Meetings

Statement of the Sponsorship Coordinator

Friday 9 June 2017

Mr President

Australia has been pleased to serve as Sponsorship Programme Coordinator again in 2017.

At the outset, we wish to thank sincerely ISU Director Juan Carlos Ruan, the ISU team, and the GICHD, in particular Susanne Rihs-Aeby, for their tireless work to facilitate the Sponsorship Programme through advice to the Donors Group and providing the extensive administrative and logistical support required to implement the Programme.

The Programme is essential to the work of the Convention, supporting widespread participation in this work, particularly by States Parties with few means and which are in the process of clearing mined areas, destroying stockpiles and assisting victims. The Programme has allowed capital and field-based delegates, selected on the basis of their expertise, to engage in critical dialogue with the Convention's Committees and fellow States Parties. This facilitates their progress in implementing their obligations on mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. It has also allowed States Parties to engage other States to take steps towards accession to our Convention.

Mr President

As we reported at the 15th Meeting of States Parties in Santiago in December last year and at the Second Pledging Conference in February this year, the Programme received only a limited number of contributions in 2016.

Although the Programme funded the participation of 30 delegates to Convention meetings in 2015, due to the limited number of contributions to the Programme's funds in 2016, the Programme was able to support only 19 delegates to Convention meetings in 2016. Nine delegates were supported to attend the Intersessional Meetings in May for matters relating to mine clearance and victim assistance, and ten delegates were sponsored to attend the Meeting of States Parties in December.

Mr President

Thanks to the ongoing support of a small number of donors who have contributed generously to the Sponsorship Programme in 2016 and 2017 - namely Austria, Chile, France, Switzerland, Turkey and Australia - the Programme commenced 2017 with just under CHF40,000 available to it.

In February, a joint letter from Austria, as the Presidency, and Australia, as Sponsorship Coordinator, was sent to all current and recent donors appealing for further contributions to the Programme. A further appeal for contributions was made at the Pledging Conference at the end of February. Following those appeals, the Programme has received additional contributions and pledges from Turkey, Switzerland and Austria, bringing the total available to the Programme in the first six months of the year to just over CHF 67,000.

On this basis, and on the advice of the ISU, the Donor Group agreed to offer sponsorship to 12 delegates to attend these Intersessional meetings at a projected maximum cost of CHF 36,000, or just under half the funds currently available. Offers were made to delegates from countries submitting Article 5 extension requests, delegates from countries due to submit workplans in support of Article 5 clearance commitments, and delegates with Article 5 deadlines in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Of the offers made, the following nine countries took up sponsorship and have delegates attending these Intersessional Meetings: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Offers were also made to Eritrea, Chad and the DRC, but for a range of reasons these offers were not taken up. As not all offers were accepted, a further offer was made to Sri Lanka, in support of the further universalisation of the treaty. In total, ten delegates have been sponsored to attend the Intersessional Meetings, at a projected cost of CHF 20,630.

I also would like to note that generous additional funding was provided by the GICHD to enable eight of the ten sponsored delegates to attend the Land Release event on Wednesday, ahead of the Intersessional Meetings.

Mr President

Bearing this in mind, and taking into account that Australia's annual contribution to the Programme of CHF26,000 will be made in the second half of the year, on current projections, the Programme will have just over CHF70,000 available to it to support delegates to attend the 16MSP in Vienna. At an average cost of CHF4-5,000 per delegate for the week,

this will mean the Programme will be able to support between 14 and 17 delegates to attend the MSP.

While this will be a good result, we must bear in mind that there are at least twenty least developed and low income countries implementing core obligations under the Convention which would benefit from sponsorship support to send delegates to meetings in 2017. At current levels, the Sponsorship Programme will not be able to support delegates from all of these countries to attend the 16MSP.

We therefore need more States Parties, which are in a position to do so, to invest in the Sponsorship Programme over the remainder of 2017 in order to ensure all least developed and low income countries have the opportunity to participate in the 16MSP. Given that the average delegate cost to attend and MSP is reasonably low – as previously mentioned, between CHF 4,000-5,000 - even relatively small contributions to the Programme by States Parties will have a significant, direct impact.

Mr President

It is my duty today to appeal for the assistance of all states parties in securing this additional funding, to enable those states with limited means which have pressing obligations under the Convention to be supported in essential, direct engagement with the Convention's Committees and membership on Article 5 mine clearance extension requests, workplans and progress, victim assistance and treaty universalisation.

Allowing mine-affected States Parties a strong voice in the future direction of the Convention's work is critical. I therefore urge all states

parties to consider funding the Sponsorship Programme as part of voluntary contributions to the work of the Convention in the coming months.

Thank you Mr President.