

**Statement by John Wattam (United Kingdom), Programme Co-ordinator
on behalf of the Sponsorship Programme Donors Group**

**(Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the
Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom).**

Mr Co-Chair,

2004 will be a more challenging year for the Sponsorship Programme and possibly its last in its current format. Like everything else about our work here this week, its future input and handling will be determined by decisions taken at the Review Conference in Nairobi in December.

But the Programme has set a benchmark and continues to develop a high standard that will need to be carefully and realistically re-assessed as we work together to advance the goals of the Convention in its next five year cycle towards a 'Mine Free World'. The Group of Donors is already giving thought to this and aim to have a more policy, rather than operational, focussed meeting before the next intersessional round of Standing Committees in June.

The original aim of the Programme, now in its fourth year, to assist attendance at these meetings by those mine-affected countries least able to help themselves, remains intact. But the Donors Group has had to develop its approach to try and accommodate rising expectations against inevitable budgetary constraints. As the international security environment evolves and other issues are prioritised, it is clear that traditional Donors may not be in a position to give as generously nor as consistently as they once did.

The Donors Group has tried to widen the Programme's income base. We have had some success but additional pledges and contributions are still needed if we are to see you all at the Review Conference in December. As of now, **Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom** constitute the Donors Group. **Ireland**, its newest member joined last week.

At the 5MSP in Bangkok last September we provided support to 76 delegates from 56 countries at an average cost of CHF 2,883. (This compares with 80 delegates from 49 countries at the 4MSP at an average cost of CHF 3,083). For this meeting we have provided support for approximately 78 delegates from 54 countries. Costings have yet to be finalised. We will continue to ensure that sponsorship resources are used equitably to obtain as widespread and sustainable participation as possible.

But, as many of you will have noticed from your letters of acceptance, participation has to be more than just chalking up numbers. Following a number of

'no-shows' in Bangkok which cost the Programme at least CHF 10,000 and some disappointing interaction from the floor, the Donors Group again takes this opportunity to emphasize the need for meaningful and active engagement - specifically from those of you who benefit from sponsorship support. Reach out to the expertise in this room, to States Parties and NGO's alike. Use the week to make the Convention work for you. We have been encouraged by those who have taken the floor today - especially those such as Palau who we have heard from for the first time. As Donors, we will increasingly look to your participation as a measure to assess future requests for support. We have also, for the first time, sought a more structured input from the Chair of the Universalisation Committee as to the seriousness of the intention of those who seek our support but are not yet signed up to the Convention. This approach will be developed at the meeting of the Universalisation Contact Group on Thursday.

Elsewhere, we continue to seek to maximise the value the Programme adds to the work of the Convention. You can help us with this by respecting the application deadline and ensuring that you honour the practical arrangements made for your attendance.

Administratively, the GICHD and Catherine in particular continue to provide the Donors Group with an excellent service at no additional cost to the Programme. Their support is invaluable and much appreciated. I could not close my remarks without thanking them for all their hard work.