



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Twelfth Meeting of States Parties

Assisting the victims

Statement by Australia

4 December 2012

Statement delivered by Ms Christine Pahlman, Mine Action Coordinator, AusAID

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates

Fifteen years have passed since the adoption of the Convention. During this time we have become well aware of what victim assistance means and how we should proceed to fulfill our promise to assist landmine survivors.

We know that victim assistance must be integrated into existing national disability, development and human rights frameworks and mechanisms.

And we know that the CRPD provides guidance to all States Parties in meeting their responsibilities to persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, and their families.

We also are well aware of the important contribution to victim assistance made by mine action authorities in national demining programmes.

We know, for instance, that mine action programmes can mobilise and channel resources for programmes, services and initiatives in support of persons with disabilities including survivors.

National authorities can advocate for the adoption, adherence to and implementation of laws and public policies that guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities including survivors. Demining efforts can help integrate mine / explosive remnants of war victim information into broader injury surveillance and disability information management systems.

Given the place of mine action programmes and national authorities with respect to victim assistance, Australia has provided funding to the Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to carry out research in this area.

The aim is to highlight good examples of how mine action programs can contribute to victim assistance and to promote such work elsewhere.

We look forward to conveying the results of this work in the coming year.

Mr President

Improving the quality of life for victims of explosive remnants of war including landmines and cluster munitions remains a focus of Australia's mine action assistance.

At the Second Review Conference in 2009, Australia committed \$100 million to mine action funding over the period 2010 to 2014.

Since 2010, over 20 per cent of Australia's total mine action assistance has contributed to victim assistance related work benefitting many countries including Cambodia, Laos, Uganda, Vietnam, Afghanistan and the DRC.

By supporting the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled, Australia is also contributing to the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims and other persons with disabilities in a broader range of countries.

Australia is proud to be assisting Cambodia to develop a new National Disability Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018. This presents an opportunity for Cambodia to use the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the guiding framework to develop the new Strategic Plan; particularly given Cambodia's intention to ratify the Convention. It will help Cambodia to fulfill its victim assistance obligations of this Convention.

This is one example of how we are helping affected countries to integrate victim assistance into a national disability plan to ensure victims have equal and sustained access to support and services.

Mr President

Australia has set an agenda to improve the reach and effectiveness of its development assistance by ensuring that people with disabilities are included in, contribute to and benefit equally from development efforts. Funding for work under the Australian aid program's *Development for All* Strategy is expected to exceed \$140 million between 2008 and 2015.

A mid-term review of *Development for All* was undertaken during 2012. The findings indicate that considerable progress has been made towards a more inclusive aid program through the production of the Strategy and its first years of implementation.

The mid-term review concluded that the Strategy and dedicated resources applied through the aid program have led to significant improvement in the lives of people with disability including increased access to education, employment, health services and law and justice.

This is no small achievement and is due in no small part to the valuable contributions of Disabled Peoples' Organisations and people with disability. We will continue to ensure that people with disability play an active and central role in guiding and informing our work on disability-inclusive development.

Our commitment to enhancing the transparency of our aid will be important in communicating our achievements and progress in disability-inclusive development. In sharing this information, we will build understanding of best practice and lessons learned, as well as promote broader commitment to and resourcing of disability-inclusive development by our donor and government partners.

The Australian aid program is beginning to develop wide-ranging experiences which provide invaluable examples of how to undertake good quality disability-specific support, as well as emerging examples of disability-inclusive development. We have committed resources to research and to support the promotion of disability work through several other agencies, in particular, UN agencies.

There are many remaining challenges for the Australian aid program to address in order to fulfill the potential of its initial investment and meet external expectations. Meeting the challenges will require careful development of our approaches and development of our capacity and systems.

We welcome the findings of the Mid-Term Review and agree to all of the recommendations.

As we work through the mid-term review's ten recommendations, Australia will continue to work to enhancing the lives of people with a disability.

Further information about the Mid-Term Review and the ten recommendations are available on the AusAID website.