



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Twelfth Meeting of States Parties

Cooperation and Assistance

Statement by Australia

6 December 2012

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

Mr President

Australia welcomes the work of the Standing Committee of Resources, Cooperation and Assistance.

The Committee provides a useful forum to share information and experiences that are fundamental to delivering effective resources, cooperation and assistance to state Parties.

Australia remains firmly committed to providing cooperation and assistance in mine action. We expect to exceed the commitment we made at the Second Review Conference to provide \$100 million in mine action support between 2010 and 2014.

Since the beginning of 2010, Australia's assistance has provided benefit to over twenty six countries and supported a number of programs that have a global reach and impact.

Since Cartagena in 2009, Australia's funding has helped to return many thousands of square meters of contaminated land to productive use and helped several countries to complete their Article 5 obligations. We have also helped to deliver mine risk education to hundreds of thousands of people and to provide rehabilitation services and victim support to thousands of people.

Over this time, Australia has continued its efforts to increase the impact and effectiveness of our support. We are doing this in a number of ways including:

- By programming the majority of mine action assistance through country aid programs to ensure that our mine action is linked with broader development programs and the national priorities of our partners.
- By supporting well targeted and effective global mine action programs including those of the UN, the ICRC and international non-governmental organisations.

- By working with countries, implementing partners and donors to coordinate and pool resources to strengthen national mine action programs (with a focus on those with long-term mine action challenges for example Afghanistan, Laos and Cambodia), and
- By focussing on coordinating efforts with partners and donors to assist more and more countries to complete their various Convention obligations.

Furthermore, we take a ‘development for all’ approach, which is inclusive of age and gender considerations as well as all victims and persons with disabilities, to improve outcomes for all affected community members.

We are also placing increasing attention on monitoring the quality and enhancing the transparency of our mine action assistance.

Since we last met at 11 MSP, Australia has undertaken a Mid-Term Review of our Mine Action Strategy. The Review concluded that the Strategy is being successfully implemented and making good progress against its intended outcomes.

The Review made seventeen recommendations around Australia’s funding approach, our geographic focus and considerations for a future strategy. Australia has accepted these recommendations and is acting upon them.

Mr President

Whilst the Pacific region has not had a high profile focus in disarmament Conventions, unexploded ordnance in many parts of the Pacific remains a threat to communities and the environment and is a serious obstacle to development.

Australia was pleased to be a key contributor, through funding and technical expertise, to the Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the Pacific Islands Forum Regional Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) on 24-26 October 2012.

The meeting, hosted by Palau, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit, aimed to mobilise and coordinate efforts to address the problems caused by WWII UXO and other explosive remnants of war in the Pacific.

The meeting was successful in a number of ways including by:

- increasing awareness of the dangers of UXO and the extent of the problem in the Pacific;
- highlighting the means available to build national capacity to deal with the problem;
- increasing regional and national knowledge of the ways and means developed over the past two decades to address the problems caused by explosive remnants of war including landmines, UXO and abandoned explosive ordnance, and
- illustrating the financial and technical assistance available as well as good practice that can be employed at the national level to attract and obtain assistance.

The meeting emphasized the importance of national prioritization and ownership of UXO action. It is hoped that affected countries will now work towards development of national UXO action plans.

Australia will continue to support a number of initiatives to assist the Pacific to address unexploded ordnance including in Palau, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Mr President

Australia's support has also included Australian Defence Force assistance to Pacific nations through Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), primarily in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Nauru and Kiribati.

Through these EOD operations, the Australian Defence Force helps reduce the threat of explosive remnants of war, including landmines, throughout the south west Pacific. These operations also foster goodwill and support bilateral relations in the region. The Australian Defence Force also assists Pacific nations by providing EOD training to develop explosive hazard awareness and regional nations' EOD capabilities.

Additionally, the Australian Defence Force works with other regional partners – such as the armed forces of the United States, New Zealand and France – to coordinate joint responses to requests for EOD assistance.

The aim of these operations is to assist affected States in reducing explosive remnants of war hazards and to assist regional nations in developing EOD capabilities to the point where our assistance is no longer required.

Mr President

To conclude, Australia would like to emphasise that effective mine action assistance is dependent on effective partnerships and cooperation between affected States, local communities and their governments, implementing operators and donors.

Australia welcomes opportunities to explore and discuss how our individual assistance efforts can be coordinated and applied to assist more and more States in meeting their MBC obligations including to achieve the important goal of becoming mine free.

As Chair of the donor coordination group of the Mine Action Support Group (the MASG) Australia is seeking to progress such work.

Earlier this year, the MASG commissioned a study to explore the contributions that the MASG may be able to make to improving donor coordination and partnerships in mine action. The Study proposed options which are now being considered by the MASG.

A second study was commissioned to explore how the MASG may contribute to the Completion Initiative established by the United Nations to assist affected countries complete their clearance work and to meet their APMBC and CCM clearance obligations.

Given obligations to one or more Conventions that may apply, the study highlighted that the desired state of completion should be defined by each affected country themselves. The study also noted that even when certain Convention clearance obligations have been met, there may still be residual contamination from other types of explosive remnants of war.

The MASG will continue to explore how to support the United Nations to update and further develop the Completion Initiative. Follow up discussions to this study will be held at the next MASG meeting and at the UN Mine Action Directors Meeting.

Finally Mr President

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of Cambodia, in strengthening efforts to coordinate resources, cooperation and assistance in mine action.

This includes domestically introducing the “Partnership Principles” which in a manner consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness:

- reaffirms development partners’ respect for national ownership and leadership,
- commits development partners to support capacity development, and
- requires development partners to align their support with Cambodian National Mine Action Standards and consult the government on project/program formulation.

We encourage other mine affected States to follow Cambodia’s lead and take such steps to strengthen their own coordination of mine action resources, cooperation and assistance.

Thank you Mr President