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**Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and
Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties

Agenda Item: COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE
6 December 2012

Statement by AUSTRIA



Mr. Robert Gerschner
Minister Counsellor
Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

I am pleased to take the floor briefly under the agenda item cooperation and assistance.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has contributed to significantly enhancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, dramatically reducing the number of new victims and steadily improving the quality of life of people and communities affected by mines and other ERWs.

We were very pleased and impressed to see the continued focus and engagement by mine-affected states and the strong commitment to solve their respective mine action challenges. We would like to thank all States Parties that have provided updates about their efforts during this week.

This week we have also been reminded of the hard work still ahead of us. Much remains to be done by the states parties in order to live up to the commitments that we have subscribed to under this Convention. We know well how much time matters for the implementation of the obligations under this Treaty. Despite all challenges involved, destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas has to be completed as soon as possible in order to prevent new victims and enable development in the affected areas.

Mr. President, we are also particularly worried by the trend of decreasing international financial assistance made available for victims assistance. The needs of survivors, affected families and communities are at the heart of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Affected individuals and communities require life-long support and we have to ensure our continued assistance to the victims according to their needs and rights.

We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of all states parties to the Mine Ban Convention to translate its provisions into concrete measures, including all states parties that are in a position to provide cooperation and assistance.

Austria has been providing funding for mine action since the mid-1990s and in several countries. In 2012, Austria has been supporting clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance measures in a number of most affected countries, notably, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya and Somalia amounting to 2 Mio EUR. Austria further continues to engage in development cooperation projects in various countries and regions that are of relevance for the purposes of this Convention.

Austria remains committed to provide mine action cooperation and assistance in the future, even in times of difficult budgetary situations.

Finally, Mr. President, Austria would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) at its 20th anniversary for its dedication, great accomplishments and partnership, and for being a constant messenger for us on the realities on the ground and the obligations under the Mine Ban Convention that have yet to be fulfilled.

Thank you.