



MINE BAN CONVENTION
13th Meeting of State Parties
Agenda 11: Cooperation and Assistance
Statement by Australia

5 December 2013

Mr President

Australia takes this opportunity to thank the Co-Chairs for their work on cooperation and assistance.

To plan and implement international cooperation and assistance in mine action, we rely on accurate and detailed information from State Parties on comprehensive work plans that accurately outline challenges and resource requirements to meet national priorities.

In that context, we also consider State ownership and prioritisation of equal importance which can be demonstrated by States through ratification of the Convention, by providing national contributions and by providing effective leadership and ownership of mine action programs including in regards to the coordination, implementation and regulation of mine action programs.

Australia is delighted to report that it has exceeded its commitment made through its mine action strategy launched at the Cartagena Review Conference to provide \$100 million towards a world free from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war over the years 2010 to 2014.

Since 2010, Australia has provided over \$110 million in mine action assistance to over 20 countries. The majority of our assistance has been allocated to priority clearance and risk education activities. Approximately 20 per cent of Australia's funding has been allocated to victim assistance initiatives.

While we have already exceeded our \$100 million commitment to mine action, we are providing on-going support to mine action in a number of countries including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Chad, Iraq, Laos, Sri Lanka and Palau.

Since the Second Review Conference, Australia has worked to ensure that our mine action activities are included within ongoing development programs. We have also worked to promote mine action as a priority and to enhance our effectiveness in delivering mine action consistent with commitments in the Cartagena Action Plan.

Mr President,

I would now like to draw your attention to the consideration of Australia's future support for mine action.

The Australian aid program is currently being integrated with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to more closely align with Australian foreign and trade policies. The geographic priority of the Australian aid program will be the Indo-Pacific region, especially the South Pacific and South East Asia.

The focus of the Australian aid program will be on sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. It will also focus on ensuring peace and security for our region and supporting greater growth and equity.

Australia will continue to be an effective and principled humanitarian donor.

Australia, like other advanced economies faces significant economic challenges. It is therefore important that we maximise the effectiveness of our aid dollars. This means focusing our investments on areas that will produce the greatest economic, social and humanitarian outcomes. A high-level of attention will be given to accountability, protecting people with disability and preventing and responding to sexual and gender based violence.

Australia will continue to consider requests for mine action assistance with an emphasis on heavily affected countries in the Indo-Pacific region and from those in which Australia engages in a bilateral aid relationship.

Mr President

Australia is proud to be a key contributor to the Clearing for Results (Phase II) project in Cambodia. This is a multi-donor mine action project managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA).

Australia has contributed AUD 6.2 million over three years (2011-12 to 2013-14) to the project focusing on clearing landmines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO), and building the capacity of CMAA.

A recent independent mid-term review of Clearing for Results found that land clearance and release activities have been hugely successful, especially because of the value for money achieved, with landmine clearance costs among the lowest in the world.

As land is cleared, farmers are using the decontaminated land to grow more crops, and consequently improving their livelihoods. Importantly, this clearance is being conducted in some of the poorest areas of Cambodia.

Based on the positive results of the mid-term review, we are pleased to advise that the Australian aid program will provide an additional \$4 million to support the final two years of

Phase II of the program. This will bring Australia's contribution to the project to a total of \$10.2 million. This support will allow a further 15 square kilometres of land to be released for economically productive activities.

Mr President

Australia's support through the aid program is complemented by clearance work undertaken by the Australian Defence Force through Operation RENDER SAFE, involving clearance operations in the South West Pacific at least every two years.

Operation RENDER SAFE is currently taking place in the Solomon Islands, and will conclude in December 2013. The operation is being undertaken in cooperation with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, Royal New Zealand Navy, United States Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy.

The following iteration of OPERATION RENDER SAFE will be held in Bougainville (Torokina), Papua New Guinea in late 2014.

Finally Mr President

Australia continues to work to ensure that mine-action programs that we support take into account the needs of persons with disabilities and are gender and age sensitive, so that women, girls, boys and men can benefit equally. We encourage the participation of all stakeholders as well as the further participation of women, in the programming of mine action.

Australia is also mindful that our individual efforts will be more effective in achieving our common vision of putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by landmines, if we work collectively in strong and closely coordinated partnerships with affected States, implementing agencies and other donors.

I thank you, Mr President.