

**Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
15th Meeting of States Parties**

General Exchange of Views - Australia

Madam President

Thank you for your efforts in organising this 15th Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention and for inviting us all to visit your beautiful country.

In particular, I would like to thank you for organising yesterday's field trip for delegates to mined areas and post-clearance sites in Arica and Parinacota. For the Australian participants and for others this was the first opportunity they have had to visit a mine clearance project. As such it was invaluable in developing a better understanding the challenges confronted in this dangerous and critical work.

Thank you also, Madam President, for Chile's tremendous efforts to secure the payments by States Parties of their arrears in conference dues in order to allow this meeting to proceed, and for Chile's generosity in bearing the costs of English, French and Spanish interpretation for the meeting. We must agree on measures at this meeting to ensure that we do not face the same funding crisis again in the future.

Madam President

Given our curtailed program I will limit my other remarks to a few brief points about Australia's priorities. We will make more detailed statements under relevant agenda items.

Australia remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and will work cooperatively with States Parties to achieve the objectives set out in the Maputo Action Plan for the 2014-19 period, and to meet the Maputo Declaration's aspiration of completion by 2025. We will continue to support the operation of the Convention through USD10 million of annual funding for bilateral projects and international organisations such as the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining. Australia has been pleased to serve as the Sponsorship Coordinator for the Convention, and that contributions from Australia and a number of other states to the Sponsorship Programme have enabled the attendance of delegates of ten states at this meeting.

Madam President

Australia maintains its commitment to the work of victim assistance under this and other disarmament conventions. As Coordinator for Victim Assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions together with Chile and Italy, we have worked cooperatively on victim assistance issues with the Mine Ban Convention Victim Assistance Committee and Coordinators on Victim Assistance for Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

We support the development of common approaches to victim assistance, consistent with the principle that the needs of all victims, be they victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions or explosive remnants of war, are similar. To highlight this principle, and the need to ensure non-discrimination and sustainability in victim assistance by addressing victim's needs through specific measures and broader efforts in parallel, in 2016 Australia has funded the development of Guidance on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance. We look forward to launching this publication, together with Guidance on Victim Assistance Reporting developed by the Mine Ban Convention Victim Assistance Committee, at a joint side event at 1pm tomorrow. We encourage you all to attend.

Madam President

Australia's Aid Policy, launched in June 2014, established gender equality and the empowerment of women as a priority for development. When launching Australia's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy in February this year, Ms Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that "promoting gender equality is smart economics, and the right thing to do." Australia supports and encourages gender equality in mine action and we look forward to participating in the panel on Gender and Mine Action later in the week.

Madam President, I wish you all the best for a successful meeting.

Thank you, Madam President.