

Australian statement as incoming co-chair on victim assistance

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Bangkok**

**Peter Truswell
Third Secretary, Australian Mission in Geneva**

On behalf of Australia and Croatia, who take over the roles of co-chairs of this committee, we express our appreciation to the Governments of France and Columbia for their excellent chairing of the committee.

Victim assistance is a difficult issue with no easy solutions for the reasons that were outlined by Canada in an intervention earlier today. However in the work of this committee we should seek to add value and find solutions within the confines of what formal committee meetings such as these can realistically achieve.

We, the new co-chairs, will not change direction. Recently the committee has usefully moved to place more emphasis on reporting by states with victims. This emphasis helps states that have victims take ownership of their responsibilities for victims and to ensure their full reintegration.

We thank the 15 states parties that reported this last year on their plans for victim assistance. We will be encouraging other countries to report during our term following the same format used during 2003. We echo the call of Canada for states to comprehensively follow this format in their reporting, and to detail in full the nature of the problem, their plans, progress and priorities for assistance.

We encourage states with mine victims to approach us or Mr Kerry Brinkert of the Implementation Support Unit to discuss implementation next year.

On the basis of reports over 2002-2004 we hope to have a more comprehensive understanding of victim assistance issues which we will report to the Review Conference in Nairobi.

Finally we congratulate the "Raising the Voices" initiative. We have greatly appreciated the work of this initiative and the commitment from survivors drawn from this region over the past year.