



AUSTRALIA

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

Speech by the Hon Ms Teresa Gambaro MP

**Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Special Representative for Mine Action**

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(Check against delivery)

Deputy State Secretary Thalmann, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to mark the opening of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

I am delighted that Australia will assume the role of President at this meeting. I congratulate Ambassador Millar in advance on her appointment.

Australia's Presidency: taking on the future challenges

Distinguished representatives

Our Convention is strong. And we have achieved much since it opened for signature a decade ago.

But I do not intend to dwell on our achievements here.

For as impressive as they are, especially on mine destruction, survivor assistance and universalisation, in all areas our work is far from complete.

And on some issues, we face critical tests for our Convention in the near future.

At this meeting, we must ready ourselves for these challenges: we must acknowledge their implications and undertake the work necessary to address these.

Australia will approach its Presidency with this understanding of the need to act – and a record of commitment to the Convention and its aims.

Australia has increased substantially this commitment in 2006.

In May I announced a five-year mine action strategy covering all five pillars of mine-action, in particular survivor assistance, mine clearance and advocacy.

This strategy is backed by a five-year funding commitment of \$75 million announced by Australia's Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, last year.

Our decision to increase our commitment from the previous 10-year, \$100 million program was in recognition of the continuing harm cause by anti-personnel mines, including within Australia's region.

I was reminded of this during a recent visit to Laos, where the humanitarian cost of explosive remnants of war is a daily recurring tragedy.

It is terrible enough that survivors and their families must suffer the horrendous consequences of anti-personnel landmines.

But anti-personnel mines and other forms of explosive remnants of war also constrains development

In this regard, we welcome the participation of non-States Parties as observers to this meeting. While this is not a substitute for full accession to the Convention, it is a necessary step in the right direction.

We urge you to follow the lead of the most recent acceding states: Haiti, Ukraine, and most encouragingly from Australia's perspective, our neighbours Brunei and Cook Islands.

Conclusion

Distinguished delegates

Our treaty demands nothing less than global adherence and full implementation.

And so I am pleased to announce that Australia will launch a strategy to promote the universalisation and implementation of the Convention during its Presidency.

As part of this strategy, Australia will fund a Small States Strategy workshop in the Asia-Pacific to promote universalisation and implementation.

We shall contribute additional funding to sustain the excellent work of the Implementation Support Unit victim assistance expert.

And I will urge the ratification of our Convention by the three signatory states which have not yet ratified, beginning with a visit to Poland later this week.

Australia puts forward this strategy in its role of President. But we very much look forward to working in partnership with States and international and non-government organisations.

It was precisely such a partnership, in which survivors play a key role, that saw the Convention open for signature nearly ten years ago.

And it will only be through continuation of this partnership that we shall realise in full the objectives of our Convention.

Distinguished delegates

At the conclusion of this opening ceremony, your work will begin.

I urge all delegations to not waste a moment; seize the opportunity of this meeting...

...to make a real difference in the lives of ordinary people struggling with the real consequences of anti-personnel landmines.

I thank you.