

**First International Pledging Conference for Implementation  
of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention:  
A Mine Free World by 2025: “The Last Stretch”**

Statement of Australia

Wednesday 3 February 2016

Madam President

At the outset, let us thank and congratulate you for your initiative in convening this Pledging Conference, to encourage States to renew and strengthen their commitment to the principles of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and to commit resources for its implementation and the achievement of a mine free world by 2025. We are confident this Conference will provide the much needed boost to the political and financial momentum which is needed to meet our objectives under the Convention and the Maputo Declaration. You have the assurance of Australia’s full support in your work as President toward these goals.

Madam President

We take the floor today in two capacities – first as the Coordinator of the Convention’s Sponsorship Programme, and second in our national capacity.

As Sponsorship Programme Coordinator, we [have been pleased to hear / look forward to hearing] of the intentions of our fellow States Parties to contribute to the Sponsorship Programme in 2016.

The Programme is essential to the work of the Convention. It enables participation in the meetings of the Convention and direct interaction with the Convention's Committees by capital and field-based experts from States Parties with few means. This participation helps guide the work of these experts in coordinating their countries' implementation of its mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance obligations.

As we reported at the Fourteenth Meeting of States Parties in December last year, and reiterated in our joint letter with you, Madam President, sent to all States Parties in January this year: although the Programme funded the participation of 30 delegates to Convention meetings in 2015, the Programme currently has insufficient funds available to it to support more than two delegates for the whole of 2016.

So we warmly welcome the pledges of other States Parties to the Programme today, and encourage States not in a position to pledge support today to keep the Programme in mind when considering contributions to the work of the Convention in the future. Given the average delegate cost under the Programme is between CHF 3,000-3,500, even relatively small contributions of a few thousand CHF will have a significant, direct impact. These contributions will be critical to ensuring widespread participation at the May Intersessional meeting and the 15MSP in Santiago.

Madam President

Speaking now in our national capacity, Australia is pleased to pledge its continued political and financial support to the objective of a mine free world by 2025.

In response to the significant humanitarian threat anti-personnel mines pose to the civilian population decades after their deployment, Australia has contributed over AUD 125 million under its Mine Action Strategy for the Australian Aid Program since 2010. The funds were directed to reducing the threat and socio-economic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war: the loss of lives and limbs, the loss of livelihoods and the loss of economic productivity.

This funding includes AUD 120,000 a year over the last three years for the Convention's Implementation Support Unit (ISU), and close to AUD 30,000 a year over the last three years for the Convention's Sponsorship Programme.

Madam President

We are pleased to advise that we intend to continue with this level of support, through a new multi-year partnership agreement we are currently negotiating with the Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining.

In indicating our intention to continue our support, we wish to note that we, together with a number of other donor States, have for a long time been providing a disproportionate share of the ISU's funding. If we used the UN Scale of Assessed Contributions as a basis, Australia would be contributing close to five times more than our dues. We have been doing so for many years. While we are pleased to continue supporting the work of the ISU, we note that we and other donors are effectively subsidising a large number of States Parties who make little or no contribution.

We strongly encourage all States Parties to contribute, as they are able, to the critical work of the ISU, the Sponsorship Programme, and direct mine action through national, bilateral and global programs. We will conquer this last stretch, together.

Thank you Madam President.