

**Sixth Annual Pledging Conference
Sponsorship Programme Coordinator**

Mr. President,

Australia is pleased to be serving as Sponsorship Programme Coordinator again in 2021. This is an important time in the life of the Convention as we continue implementation of the Oslo Action Plan under continued restrictions.

Last year we were unable to execute a sponsorship programme with the informal and formal meetings of the Convention held in an online format due to the ongoing travel restrictions. We are hopeful that this year we will be able to welcome representatives of our Convention community in person.

An important part of implementation of the Oslo Action Plan will be to ensure that those States with limited means and that require support in attending the meeting are able to attend and updates the States Parties on their implementation efforts. As you will appreciate from the joint appeal letter sent by Australia and the Presidency, such participation does not only allow national experts to share progress in their countries' implementation of their obligations under the Convention but also allows them to share their challenges and to hold a continuous dialogue with other States and office holders of the Convention. This is crucial, both at the international and national level, to ensure effective implementation of the Convention and Oslo Action Plan and supports the Committees and President in fulfilling their respective mandates.

In addition to this, support through the Sponsorship Programme has also allowed participation by States not party that have demonstrated an interest in the work of the Convention. This is important to our universalization efforts and allows States not party to communicate steps they are taking towards accession to the Convention

Mr. President,

As we reported at the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties last November, the sponsorship programme enjoys contributions from a small number of States Parties— namely Austria, Canada, France, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and Australia— we are extremely thankful for these contributions.

Mr. President

At the moment the Programme has just over CHF 131,000 available. Given that the average delegate cost to attend these meetings is reasonably low - between CHF 3,500-4,000 - even relatively small contributions to the Programme by States Parties will have a significant and direct impact.

It is my role and duty today to appeal to all States Parties to consider a new, renewed or increased contribution to the Sponsorship Programme, to provide this contribution as early as possible and to consider multi-annual funding to make this programme sustainable as we work towards the States Parties 2025 ambitions.