

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

Victim Assistance

Statement of Australia

Madam President

Australia thanks the Committee on Victim Assistance – Belgium, Colombia and Senegal, under the leadership of Thailand as Chair – for its work over the past year to assist States Parties in the fulfilment of their commitments related to victim assistance under the Maputo Action Plan, and for the conclusions it has presented on the progress, achievements and challenges of States Parties on victim assistance.

We support the Committee's conclusions, particularly with respect to: the challenges for states in meeting reporting obligations; the importance of provision of information on victim assistance budgets, progress in assessing the needs of victims, ensuring the inclusion of victims, and implementation of national policies, plans and legal frameworks; and the sustainability of funding for victim assistance. We welcome the Committee's initiative in developing Guidance on Victim Assistance Reporting.

As Coordinator on Victim Assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2015 and 2016, Australia wishes also to thank the Victim Assistance Committee for joining with us to build cooperation on victim assistance between the two conventions, and also with Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, over the past year. Our committees have met a number of times to share information on our respective priorities and improve coordination between us.

This cooperation has been motivated by our shared convictions that:

- victims – both survivors and indirect victims - of cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive remnants of war all have the same rights and similar needs with regard to care, rehabilitation, and social inclusion;
- the efforts we, as States Parties, make to recognise these rights and meet these needs are therefore complementary, regardless of the convention we are working within; and
- consequently, it is possible to develop common approaches to victim assistance issues across conventions

Our cooperation has culminated in today's joint side event to launch *Guidance on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance and Guidance on Victim Assistance Reporting* –publications which we hope demonstrate the real potential for linking efforts across the disarmament conventions with the ultimate aim of helping States to improve the quality of life and uphold the rights of all victims. We encourage you all to attend.

Madam President

Australia places a high priority on providing assistance to victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, and to supporting the efforts of other states to improve their delivery of victim assistance.

We have committed AUD1.9 million over three years to the International Committee of the Red Cross's Special Fund for the Disabled. This contribution will fund the Special Fund's work in 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where it operates 32 rehabilitation centres and prosthetic and orthotic schools.

And Australia has contributed AUD500,000 to the International Committee for the Red Cross's 2016 Special Appeal for Disability and Mine Action. This appeal provides assistance to persons with disabilities, including survivors of conflict, violence and of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war.

We understand that, in order to ensure sustainable support for victims, it is essential to realize victim assistance obligations in a non-discriminatory manner both through specific initiatives, and also through broader development, human rights, and humanitarian efforts under national plans, policies and frameworks. This dual approach to victim assistance, involving both specific and broader efforts, is referred to as an integrated approach to victim assistance.

We will contribute AUD600,000 over three years to support Handicap International's work supporting states' efforts to implement an integrated approach to victim assistance.

This funding has enabled Handicap International to support the development by Australia, together with Chile, Italy, Iraq and Austria, of the Guidance on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance to be launched at today's side event.

This Guidance highlights good practices and national examples that demonstrate that an integrated approach is feasible and how it is being implemented in practice by some affected and donor States. We hope this Guidance will be a useful tool for States Parties to this convention, the Cluster Munitions Convention and Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in our joint efforts to provide non-discriminatory and sustainable assistance that improves the quality of life and uphold the rights of victims.

Thank you Madam President.