

20th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva
21-25 November 2022
Australian Comments on Cooperation and Assistance

Mr President,

International assistance and cooperation is critical to achieving our goal of a world free of Anti-Personnel Mines. Australia is fully committed to doing our part.

In 2021, Australia contributed over \$5.8 million to mine action, including through the UN Mine Action Service and the UN Development Program. Funding flowed to mine risk education, clearance of mines, and advocacy, benefitting Iraq, Palau, Sri Lanka, Syria, Cambodia, and Afghanistan.

Australia has participated in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action, which promotes practical cooperation and builds regional humanitarian mine action capacity.

In our immediate region, ERW continue to pose a very real threat to the safety of Pacific Island communities and restrict the use of land for socio-economic development. That's why, in addition to our broader mine action program, Australia has made an enduring contribution to ERW clearance in the South-West Pacific through Operation Render Safe.

Operation Render Safe disposes of ERW from the Second World War safely, and provides education and training to improve national capabilities. The Australian Defence Force also conducts surveys to identify, prioritise, and dispose of ERW.

Australia works closely with host nations, at their invitation, in determining where and how operations are carried out. Allow me to highlight a few recent examples of this work.

Australia has continued its cooperation with the Solomon Islands on unexploded ordnance to boost the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force capacity to safely extract and dispose of ERW. In 2022, Australia provided the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force with critical

equipment and delivered two training courses accredited to UN International Mine Action Standards level two.

This complements ongoing training and operational support to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force through an embedded Australian Defence Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal advisor and operational funding. To continue building our region's capacity, Australia will also support the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to deliver UN International Mine Action Standards level one training to Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

In September this year, Australia successfully supported the Government of Nauru with unexploded ordnance disposal under Operation Render Safe. As part of a joint activity with the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, Australia supported scoping to conduct an exercise in which 22 aerial bombs were located for removal from Tuvalu waters.

We pay particular tribute to the courage of clearance operators in their difficult and dangerous work. The development of new technologies to reduce risk, including remote detection, ground penetrating radar, and detection algorithms are areas we are watching with interest.

Thank you

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