

Sponsorship Program Update

Thank you President and good afternoon to all colleagues.

I am pleased to take the floor, on behalf of Australia, to deliver an update on the Sponsorship Program.

Many of you will be aware that the sponsorship program for this Convention was initiated by a group of donors back in 2000. The primary aim of the program is to support participation in the Convention's meetings by mine-affected States - with active clearance and victim assistance obligations - that may lack the financial resources to pay for their own attendance.

It also allows delegates of State not yet party, interested in pursuing accession to the Convention to participate in the work of the Convention.

Total contributions to the Sponsorship Fund available for 2022 totalled almost **102,000 CHF**. There was also a carryover of approximately 129,500 CHF due to reduced expenditure in 2021.

I wish to recognise the generous contributions of donors to the Sponsorship Fund. These donors include Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey and my own State Australia..

As a result of these contributions, in 2022 the Sponsorship Programme was able to offer sponsorship to **29 delegates for the intersessional meetings and 35 delegates for this 20th Meeting of States Parties**, 33 per cent of which are women.

Total expenditure of the Sponsorship Programme in 2022 was approximately 165,000 CHF (swiss franc). That leaves the fund with a **remaining balance of approximately 66,000 CHF**. This means we should be in a position to support a modest number of eligible delegates attending the intersessional meetings this year. I understand that more contributions will be forthcoming from States in 2023, Australia will certainly be providing a contribution to the Sponsorship Programme in 2023.

Due to a high level of demand and limited funds available, the program is not able to support *all* delegates who may wish to be sponsored. We seek to support delegates from a mix of different regions and to strive for gender balance.

I appeal to all States Parties to consider a new or renewed contribution for the Sponsorship Program. Given that the average delegate cost to attend these meetings is reasonably low, even modest contributions to the Program will have a significant impact.

As we head towards a Review Conference year in 2024, we will need to significantly strengthen the sponsorship programme to allow us to ensure an inclusive conversation in the development and adoption of the potential new action plan to be adopted for the period of 2023-2024. At current level, the Sponsorship Programme will not be possible to sponsor

the number of delegate from mine affected States that may need support to participate in our deliberations.

In this regard, we will be reaching out to many of you to discuss this matter and further encourage your support to provide a contribution to the sponsorship programme. We hope that your State will consider this important matter.

Finally, I extend my sincere appreciation to the ISU and to the GICHD for all their work in administrating the sponsorship program.

Thank you.