

## **Ninth Annual Pledging Conference Sponsorship Programme Coordinator**

Thank you Mr. President, it is a pleasure to join you on this panel today.

Australia is pleased to be serving as Sponsorship Programme Coordinator again in 2024.

As many of you can appreciate, the Sponsorship Programme is essential to the work of the Convention. It enables participation in the meetings of the Convention by experts from States Parties with limited means. Such participation not only allows national experts to share progress in 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 continuous conversation – and it is a multi-faceted conversation - between all of us is crucial to ensure effective implementation. 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 As we know, this year we head to a Review Conference.

The participation of mine-affected States is critical. Allowing mine-affected States Parties to have a say in the future direction of the Convention's work is essential to the good functioning of this Convention. Given the importance of this year, we therefore urgently need more States Parties, which are in a position to do so, to invest in the Sponsorship Programme for 2024 to ensure broad participation. Given that the average delegate cost to attend these meetings is reasonably low - between CHF 3,000-4,000 - even relatively small contributions to the Programme by States Parties will have a significant and direct impact.

Of course all contributions are welcome, big or small.

Mr. President, As we reported at the Twenty-First Meeting of the States Parties here in Geneva last November, thanks to contributions from a small number of States Parties – namely Austria, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Australia – the Sponsorship Programme supported a total of 44 delegates to attend meetings of the Convention in 2023.

Twenty-Four (24) delegates were sponsored to attend the intersessional meetings and twenty (20) delegates were sponsored to attend the 21MSP. The total cost of the Programme in 2023 was approximately CHF134,000 comprised of approximately CHF65,000 for the intersessional meetings and CHF69,000 for the 21MSP.

Mr. President

At present the Sponsorship Programme started this year with approximately 100'000 CHF at this level, the Programme will only have capacity to support approximately Twenty-Five delegates to attend the June Intersessional Meetings and the Fifth Review Conference and its preparatory meetings. However, there are more than 19 least developed and low-income countries implementing core obligations, including mine clearance and victim assistance, under the Convention which would benefit from sponsorship

support to engage in the work of the Convention in 2024. It is my role, no it is my 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 next five-year action plan.

This is an important milestone for the Convention, 25 years after entry into force and a Review Conference year.

Today, when the global norm seems to be under threat we must use the opportunities in 2024 to demonstrate our collective pledge to the Convention, including through guaranteeing an inclusive process in our implementation efforts. Finally, as this is a Review Conference year, it is more important than ever to foster conversation amongst States Parties and civil society to ensure the best outcome of our deliberations.

We thank those that have already this year pledged support to the Sponsorship Programme, including Canada, Germany, and Switzerland and look forward to more States joining us today to pledge support for the Sponsorship Programme.