Thank you Madame Coordinator.

We appreciate the work undertaken by Austria and Bosnia & Herzegovina in the area of victim assistance. We also welcome the positive updates today by some affected States, and thank the panellists for their presentations.

This intervention is more by way of general background, and will touch upon some of our partnerships that are relevant to the discussion.

The CCM, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and Protocol V to the CCW- all provide a common approach to assisting victims and survivors of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. These Conventions also present a promise to victims and survivors that we must ensure is delivered on.

As a State in a position to assist, we are increasingly focused upon ensuring that resources build appropriate and sustained capacities within affected States, in order to address the long-term challenges of victim assistance.

It is clear that in order for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable, they will need to be integrated within broader disability plans and programs.

As a donor, the first challenge we often find in programming funding for victim assistance is that a disability or victim assistance perspective is not highlighted as a priority development issue at the national level by affected governments.
In other words, these issues need to be integrated into national programs as well as into broader bilateral and multilateral cooperation to attract the resourcing needed to build national capacities and sustain programs. As a donor we look to our affected State partners:

- To provide accurate information on their mine action challenges and resource requirements; and

- To provide effective national leadership and coordination of mine action.

As our funding for victim assistance is largely drawn from our bilateral aid budgets, work on victim assistance and disability needs to be presented as a priority if it is to be allocated funding.

Madame Coordinator

Improving the quality of life for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war continues to be a significant focus of Australia’s mine action assistance. In providing victim assistance support, Australia does not discriminate against or among victims, whether they are victims of explosive remnants of war or victims of armed conflict, and other persons with disabilities.

It is therefore difficult to separate out and identify in precise terms our support for victims of cluster munitions from support provided to victims of antipersonnel mines and other explosive remnants of war, and support provided more generally for disability-inclusive projects, just as Japan had noted.

In Laos since 1998, Australian-funded victim assistance projects have helped 12,000 vulnerable people living in poverty in remote communities. This funding has increased access to rehabilitation services and helped people with disabilities to participate in community activities. An ongoing national victims survey will lead to better unexploded ordnance information system management and improved coordination of responses.

Since the 2 MSP, Australia has committed a further $3 million through the ICRC Special Mine Action Appeal to support victim assistance including rehabilitation and reintegration work.

In addition to funding victim assistance work, Australia also increasingly focuses on supporting people with a disability. Australia’s Development for All strategy marks a significant change in the way Australia’s aid is designed and delivered. Development for All is about improving the reach and effectiveness of development assistance by ensuring
that people with disabilities are included in, contribute to, and benefit equally from
development efforts. Funding for work under the strategy is expected to be over $140
million between 2008 and 2015. This includes around $80 million for improving the
quality of life for people with disabilities.

Australia’s mine action program and disability inclusive development program, work
increasingly closely to ensure both programs are of benefit to survivors and people with a
disability. For example, Australia’s funding to the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled ($4
million from 2011 to 2014) is drawn from our disability program budget and is being
provided to assist with the physical rehabilitation of people with a disability (including
mine victims including by targeting mine affected countries).

Australia will continue to advocate for greater linkages between victim assistance and
disability-inclusive development, including under relevant humanitarian disarmament
treaties and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Australia will also continue to progressively and strategically assist cluster munition
affected states in fulfilling their victim assistance obligations. We will do this by
supporting specific victim assistance initiatives integrated into broader development
frameworks to ensure that cluster munition victims have access to medical, social and
public services on an equal basis with others in their communities.

Lastly, we agree with the call by the CMC that greater understanding is needed on the
impact of our partnerships on victim assistance. We need to better understand the
outcomes of assistance efforts, not just its outputs. This enhanced knowledge should
facilitate further cooperation and assistance being provided, and improve its effectiveness.

Thank you.