

Victim Assistance

Statement of Australia

Mr President

In recognition of the life-long impact that cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war have on their victims, Australia places a high priority on providing assistance to victims and to supporting international efforts to improve the delivery of assistance under this convention and also under Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Ottawa treaty.

We have been privileged to have served as co-coordinator with Chile on Victim Assistance under this convention and we thank Chile for its hard work and cooperation in pursuit of our common objectives.

We would also like to thank Austria and Iraq for their efforts, as co-coordinators on cooperation and assistance, in developing the draft guidance on an integrated approach to victim assistance we are considering in this session.

And we wish to express particular thanks to Ms Elke Hottentot of Handicap International, and Mr Gaëtan de Beaupuis, who

have been instrumental in the development of this initiative and who continue to provide invaluable technical assistance to the Coordinators.

Australia regards this Guidance, which seeks to highlight good practices in integration of victim assistance in broader national frameworks, as an important tool to help States ensure the provision of services to victims long after the cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war have been cleared.

As all of you who work in the field appreciate, these weapons do not discriminate and it is important that we neither discriminate between victims of different weapons nor between victims and other persons with disabilities, but focus on ensuring that all persons with disabilities receive appropriate assistance and support.

Australia is committed to continuing to support work in the area of 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.

We have also 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 victims of conflict, violence and mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war.

By making contributions to these well-established, effective operations Australia is able to extend its reach and provide assistance to victims in places where we are not able to be present ourselves.

Australia encourages all affected states, with the support of development partners, to proactively assess and integrate victim assistance requirements into national plans, including those that address disability, healthcare, rehabilitation, social service, employment, development and humanitarian initiatives. The integration and enhancement of victim assistance into broader national plans will help ensure that victim assistance is addressed by national institutions and predictably funding into the future. We trust that the guidance we are considering today, once finalised, will assist states in their pursuit of these objectives.

Thank you Mr President.