



Convention on Cluster Munitions 9th Meeting of States Parties

Geneva 2-4 September 2019

Australian Comments on Universalisation

Mr President

In opening, and as our first contribution we wish to thank the secretariat for the organisation of this Meeting of States Parties and congratulate you, Ambassador AZEEZ, for the tireless leadership you and Sri Lanka have shown. This is particularly noteworthy given Sri Lanka's 2018 accession to the Convention. Of course, such proactive engagement is not surprising given that Sri Lanka has been active on disarmament matters since proposing the first United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament in 1978.

Given the financial challenges you mention in your opening remarks Mr President, Australia appreciates your positive approach in navigating this matter.

Australia also recognises and congratulates Gambia (11 Dec 18) and the Philippines (3 Jan 19) in becoming the newest States Parties to the Convention.

We would also like to take this opportunity to make some general observations and specific comments on international cooperation and assistance, and victim assistance.

Mr President, Australia notes with concern that cluster munitions continue to be used in current conflicts, including in Syria and allegations of new use in Libya. This is particularly concerning given the disproportionate effect these weapons have on civilian populations. The 2019 Cluster Munitions Monitor estimates that 99 per cent of cluster munition casualties in 2018 were civilians – and where details were known, the majority of casualties were children. We call on all states not currently party to the Convention to accede to the Convention and prevent the further spread of these terrible weapons.

Mr President, in closing, Australia will continue to work to promote the Convention in our region and we note New Zealand's exploration of the challenges therein so we will not seek to repeat that. We are exploring options in partnership with our close friend and neighbour New Zealand, to improve universalisation and implementation of a number of conventional weapons-related treaties in the Pacific.

Thank you Mr President