



**Convention on Cluster Munitions**

**Second Meeting of States Parties**

**GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

**Statement by HE Mr Peter Woolcott**

**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Geneva**

**13 September 2011**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates

Firstly, Mr President, I congratulate you on your election to this important role. We look forward to a successful Second Meeting of States Parties under your guidance and offer our full support and cooperation to you.

I would also like to convey our appreciation to the Government and people of Lebanon for their embrace of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We meet for the second time to continue the movement towards ending the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

Lebanon – as a country affected by cluster munitions – knows the costs that are borne by communities living near cluster munitions remnants. The Lebanese Government, by working together with civil society and countries, is demonstrating that partnerships are at the heart of effective implementation of the Convention.

Mr President

Australia is pleased to participate in this Second Meeting of States Parties. Australia remains firmly committed to the Convention and its goal to end suffering of civilians caused by cluster munitions around the world.

We are pleased to have assisted Lebanon in its preparations for this meeting. We have been honoured to continue in the role of Friend of the President on clearance of cluster munition remnants and risk reduction education. Through this we have consulted widely with affected States, international organisations and expert bodies on how best to facilitate and promote implementation of this important humanitarian component of the Convention. We have prepared a paper on the application of all available methods for the efficient implementation of Article 4, and we look forward to discussing it with delegates during the course of this week.

In advance of the establishment of an Implementation Support Unit, Australia provided additional resources to the Lebanese Government and UNDP to support the organisation of this Meeting and assistance to the President.

Mr President

Since it came into effect only 13 months ago, the Convention has helped to reduce the harm from cluster munitions caused to civilians. It has assisted countries to address the threats posed by cluster munition remnants. We are confident that these benefits will increase through dedicated work in the coming years with the commitment of all states and organisations involved.

We have seen over the past year that the CCM's clearance provisions have encouraged additional land to be freed from the debilitating effects of cluster munition remnants. More and more contaminated areas have been surveyed, marked, cleared and released back for productive use. Clearance and land release has significant developmental benefits to local communities, through allowing greater access to resources and farmland, improved infrastructure projects and economic activity. We encourage all those involved in clearance activities to involve local communities in decision making on clearance processes.

In addition, the ground-breaking provisions on victims will assist survivors of cluster munitions, their families and their communities. It is important that the Convention continues to help facilitate much needed access by survivors – on an equal basis with others – to medical, social and public services.

Stockpile destruction has also moved forward since the First Meeting of States Parties, with progress in all 15 States with reported stockpiles. Remarkably, in such a short period more than 64 million stockpiled submunitions are reported to have been destroyed. We congratulate these states on their significant achievement.

The Convention has also seen strong progress towards universalisation. Since we met in Vientiane last November, 16 countries have joined the convention bringing the total to 62 States now Party. We particularly congratulate the Cook Islands as one of our Pacific neighbours and one of the world's smallest nations joining the Convention, and look forward to welcoming more Asia-Pacific nations over the coming years.

These individual elements are all significant steps forward.

That said, significant challenges remain in implementing the convention. These challenges include:

- Understanding the extent of contamination in some countries;
- The lack of sufficient technical expertise and financial resources to clear explosive remnants of war at an expeditious rate;
- The size and variety of some stockpiles; and
- The scarcity of accessible quality care for survivors, particularly those in remote areas.

To make further progress we must continue to harness cooperation and assistance from both national and international communities.

Mr President

Your country Lebanon is one of the countries most heavily affected by cluster munitions. These weapons can have terrible consequences for communities, consequences that still affect the lives of communities for many years after armed conflict has ended.

Australia is pleased to be able to contribute to assisting States affected by cluster munition remnants.

Our Mine Action Strategy works towards a world free from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. Assistance under this Strategy is being directed towards improving quality of life for victims, reducing deaths and injuries and enhancing the capacity of countries to manage their mine action projects.

Australia has made a commitment of \$100 million to these issues over five years from 2010 to 2014 of which we have already committed \$62.7 million.

Over the last five years Australia has contributed almost AUD5million to help clear areas of Lebanon of land mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

We will continue to work with partner countries, international and regional organisations and civil society organisations in the fulfilment of the Convention's objectives.

Mr President

At this Second Meeting of States Parties, we look forward to sharing ideas and views on how best to implement the Convention and universalise its norms. This Meeting should also begin to put in place the structures that will support the full and effective implementation of the Convention's obligations. We remain fully supportive of these efforts.

We have much to do yet in working together towards achieving a world free of cluster munitions. We urge all present to take advantage of the important opportunity provided by this Meeting to work towards a world free of cluster munitions.