



## **Convention on Cluster Munitions**

### **Third Meeting of States Parties**

## **GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

### **Statement by Australia**

**12 September 2012**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates

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

I would also like to convey our appreciation to Norway for its tireless commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Australia was pleased to be among the first countries to sign the Convention – here in Oslo – on the day it opened for signature on 3 December 2008. And now, with 111 countries having joined the Convention, we meet for the third time to continue progress towards ending the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

Mr President

Australia is pleased to participate in this Third Meeting of States Parties and remains firmly committed to the Convention. The Convention has seen continued progress on universalisation. Since we met in Beirut last September, 12 countries have ratified the Convention bringing the total to 75 States now Party.

Since signing the Convention, Australia has made progress on domestic procedures to ratify the Convention. We are delighted to announce that our implementing legislation passed the Australian Parliament just three weeks ago and received Royal Assent on 8 September. We are undertaking the last domestic steps and will deposit our instrument of ratification as soon as possible. We look forward to joining the ranks of States Parties to the Convention very soon.

Mr President

In a relatively short period of time, the Convention has demonstrated strong humanitarian achievements, including with regard to the protection of civilians in conflict zones.

As we all know, cluster munitions leave a deadly legacy long after the cessation of conflict. And it is civilians who bear the brunt of these weapons, which injure and kill indiscriminately, damage infrastructure, hinder humanitarian access and cause additional suffering through deadly remnants that remain for years after conflict has ceased.

The role of the Convention in protecting civilians is one of prevention. In recognition of the tragic impact of cluster munitions on civilian populations, the Convention has helped to reduce the harm that cluster munitions cause civilians and has helped to strengthen international humanitarian law. It has assisted countries to address the threats posed by cluster munition remnants. These benefits will continue to increase through dedicated work in the coming years with the commitment of all states and organisations involved.

The Convention's clearance provisions have led to more and more contaminated areas having been surveyed, marked, cleared and released back for productive use. Clearance and land release have significant developmental benefits to local communities, through allowing greater access to resources and farmland, thereby allowing infrastructure projects to proceed and economic activity to expand.

We were pleased that last year's Meeting of States Parties endorsed Australia's paper on the efficient implementation of Article 4 and encouraged States to implement the paper's recommendations. We provide our full support to the work of Coordinators, Ireland and Laos, and their emphasis that clearance and risk reduction are achievable tasks.

In addition, the provisions on victim assistance 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 Second Meeting of State Parties. It is commendable that the majority of States Parties with reported stockpiles have indicated that destruction was scheduled to be completed well in advance of the Convention's eight-year deadline. We are also encouraged by the newest States Parties and signatory states which have already started to destroy or to plan for the destruction of their stockpiles.

These elements of the progress on the Convention are all significant steps forward.

This 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 cluster munitions expeditiously, and in some cases safely;
- 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

Australia is pleased to be able to contribute to assisting countries 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 directed towards improving the 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. Since we made this pledge in November 2009, we have already committed over \$95 million and are close to meeting our original commitment.

We will continue to work together with partner countries, international and regional organisations and civil society organisations in the fulfilment of the Convention's objectives. Australia welcomes this meeting as an opportunity to explore and discuss how our individual assistance efforts can be collectively applied and effectively coordinated. We will also progress this work as Chair of the Mine Action Support Group.

Mr President

At this Third Meeting of States Parties, we look forward to exchanging ideas and views on practical contributions to drive forward the implementation and universalisation of the Convention. Australia supports the creation of an Implementation Support Unit as soon as possible, consistent with the decision of 2MSP. We appreciate 2MSP President's work in this regard and, whichever funding mechanism is chosen, it is important to ensure the predictability and sustainability of finances.

We urge all present to use the opportunity provided by this Meeting to work towards a world free of cluster munitions.