

Convention on Cluster Munitions

Clearance and Risk Reduction Education (Article 4)

Statement of Australia

Madam President

Australia thanks Ireland and Laos for their leadership on clearance and risk reduction and for their preparations for today's meeting. We offer them our full support.

Australia supports the clearance and risk reduction obligations of the Convention and encourages all States to clear cluster munitions contaminated areas, in the safest and most efficient manner possible, as soon as possible after active hostilities have ceased.

Australia welcomes the fact that almost all of the 13 States Parties and the one signatory with reported contamination from cluster munitions have taken steps to address the contamination. The clearance obligations of the Convention clearly provide considerable humanitarian and developmental benefits.

But we recognise that clearance of cluster munition remnants remains challenging for many States due to the danger, cost and technical capabilities required to survey, detect, clear and destroy cluster munition remnants.

Madam President

The Coordinators report on the "Effective steps for the clearance of Cluster Munition Remnants" helpfully demonstrates that addressing contamination effectively can result in more expedient land release, if resources are targeted appropriately by adopting a systematic, step-by-step approach. This would achieve quicker clearance of cluster munition remnants and takes up fewer resources over the long-term.

Australia views the Coordinators' report as a valuable contribution to assist all stakeholders engaged in mine action in affected States. It is a useful supplement to Australia's 2011 paper on efficient implementation of Article 4 for land release. The four broad steps outlined in the Coordinators' report are a logical framework for accomplishing efficient clearance, while allowing for the broad variety of circumstances in areas affected by cluster munition remnants, which could include the risks involved in areas cross-contaminated with other explosive remnants of war.

We support the practical ideas put forward by the Coordinators' as areas of further work on clearance and risk reduction under the Convention's framework. We would support the adoption of this report.

Australia also thanks Norway for its paper on compliance with Article 4. The paper raises important issues to be considered early in the clearance process. We would welcome further discussion of these issues. Australia notes the proposed draft declaration of compliance template is intended to be voluntary guidance on areas of best practice with respect to compliance. As a general principle we discourage any prescriptive requirements that might overly burden affected States parties and prevent them from seeking to achieve early and efficient land release. Consistent with the Convention, a State party should continue to have the flexibility to determine the appropriate methods and circumstances upon which it would be satisfied that it has fulfilled its clearance obligations under Article 4.

Both papers provide useful guidance to States parties on the work that remains to be done under Article 4. As the main responsibility for achieving obligations under Article 4 rests with national governments, Australia is fully committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Convention with respect to cooperation and assistance.

Madam President

Through Australia's Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program, Australia's assistance is predominantly directed at identifying and clearing contaminated land and providing risk education to local populations. Reporting by States of their clearance activities helps ensure that future efforts are suitably targeted and tailored. Clear reporting by States of the contamination challenges is an important element in the process of attracting the resources required to meet Article 4 obligations.

Australia is working to provide assistance for mine risk reduction education for explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions and landmines, which is carried out in coordination with mine clearance activities and includes appropriate community consultation.

While Australia met its \$100 million commitment to mine action in late 2012, Australia continues to support international mine action work and has already provided an additional \$10 million to mine action. Through our mine action program, Australia currently supports the clearance of cluster munitions in Laos, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

Australia will also continue to offer its support for clearance and risk education programs within the framework of its Mine Action Strategy.

Thank you