

## *General exchange of views*

### **Australian statement**

Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates

Firstly, Madam President, I congratulate you on your election to this important role. We look forward to a successful Fourth Meeting of States Parties under your guidance and offer our support and cooperation to you. We also thank outgoing President Ambassador Steffen Kongstad of Norway for his skilful chairmanship.

I would also like to convey our appreciation to Zambia for its efforts and organisation in hosting the Fourth Meeting of States parties and its generous and warm hospitality. We also look forward to deepening cooperation and assistance under the Convention with States Parties to realise its goals.

The Convention has seen continued progress on universalisation. Since we met in Oslo last September, 8 countries have ratified the Convention bringing the total to 83 States now Party. Australia was one of them.

Having been an active participant in the first three meetings of the States Parties as a signatory, Australia is now delighted to attend this Fourth Meeting of States Parties as a State Party.

Our ratification processes took longer than we would have liked, but they have been thorough. As part of that process the Australian Parliament has passed legislation to ensure that Australian law is consistent with the Convention. The successful passage of that legislation enabled us to lodge our instrument of ratification on 8 October 2012. This legislation, effective 1 April 2013, faithfully gives domestic legal effect to all elements of the convention: inter alia, it bans the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retaining and transferring of cluster munitions.

Australia is proud of its record of active participation in the development of the Convention. We were one of the first countries to sign when it opened for signature - in Oslo on 3 December 2008. In accordance with its obligations under the Convention, Australia submitted its initial transparency report on 6 September 2013.

And now, with 112 countries having joined the Convention, we meet for the fourth time to continue progress towards ending the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

Australia is proud to be an active advocate on disarmament. As one of the original co-authors of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we take this opportunity at this forum today - to advise States Parties that a high-level event on the Arms Trade Treaty will be held in New York on 25 September, in just a fortnights time. This coincides with the United Nations General Assembly Leaders' Week and we strongly encourage maximum ratification. We urge States to sign and ratify the treaty for its earliest

entry into force. We also note that a multi-donor UN facility supporting cooperation on arms regulation is available to support States in theratification and implementation of the ATT.

Madam 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. We commend the work of the UN implementing agencies and civil society on helping take this work forward.

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. In that regard we were all moved by the story of the young Ethiopian woman yesterday.

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 must continue to share expertise, consider lessons learned and explore effective approaches to the challenge of clearance of cluster munitions remnants.

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. Victim assistance is a long term challenge for the Convention. We must strive to integrate our efforts within a wider development agenda to ensure we make the best use of resources to help survivors.

**Stockpile destruction** has also moved forward remarkably since the Convention's entry into force. It is commendable that almost all of the 34 States Parties with reported stockpiles have either completed destruction, started the destruction process or started developing plans for such destruction. With all States parties' stockpile destruction obligations looking likely to be completed well in advance of the Convention's initial eight-year deadline, we should seek to maintain this momentum.

Nonetheless, 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 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 and further evolve to promote the universalisation and full and effective implementation of the CCM.

Madam President

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

Australia's Mine Action Strategy works towards a world free from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. We take a comprehensive approach to mine action cooperation and assistance. 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 made a commitment of \$100 million to these issues over five years from 2010 to 2014. We are pleased to advise that Australia met its \$100 million commitment to mine action in late 2012, some two years ahead of schedule. Although we have met this achievement, Australia is continuing to support mine action work, which means our contribution will exceed this figure of \$100 million

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 continue to progress this work as Chair of the Mine Action Support Group.

At this Fourth 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. This Meeting should also continue to put in place the structures that will support the full and effective implementation of the Convention's obligations. We remain fully supportive and committed these efforts.

We have much to do yet in working together towards achieving a world free of cluster munitions. Cluster munitions – millions of which are estimated to have been deployed and remain unexploded in conflict zones around the world – continue to represent a grave and persistent threat. We urge all present to take advantage of the important opportunity provided by this Meeting to work towards a world free of cluster munitions.

Thank you