

International cooperation and assistance (Article 6)

Australia thanks Mexico and Sweden for their leadership on international cooperation and assistance, and for their preparations for today's meeting.

Australia welcomes the variety of initiatives underway to assist State Parties in meeting their Convention obligations, and we encourage affected States to continue their efforts to confirm the extent of their cluster munition remnant contamination and identify and prioritise their assistance needs to the international community.

Australia remains committed to efforts to enhance the availability and effectiveness of cooperation and assistance in order to build on the achievements of the Convention.

Australia is pleased to report that it has exceeded its commitment to provide \$100 million for mine action over the years 2010 to 2014.

- Since 2010, Australia has provided over \$110 million in mine action assistance to over 20 countries.
- The majority of our assistance (72 per cent or some \$80 million), has been allocated to priority clearance and risk education activities.
- A further 20 per cent of Australia's funding (\$22.9 million) has been allocated to victim assistance initiatives.

Our support is assisting many countries affected by cluster munitions including Laos, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the DRC and Iraq.

While Australia has already exceeded its \$100 million commitment to mine action, with over sixteen months remaining under the current strategy are continuing to support a number of ongoing programs. We will continue to consider requests for assistance with an emphasis on heavily affected countries in the Asia-Pacific region and from those in which Australia engages in a bilateral aid relationship.

In November 2011, Australia assumed the Chair of the Mine Action Support Group (the MASG). In this role we are seeking to progress work that explores how our individual assistance efforts can be coordinated and applied to better assist States to address their mine action challenges and meet their Convention obligations.

The MASG has some thirty donor members and currently meets two times per year. Thanks to the generous funding support of the United Kingdom, the MASG is now assisted by a part-time Secretariat.

- Under Australia’s Chair, the MASG Secretariat was tasked with undertaking two studies: one on improving donor coordination and another to consider how the MASG can work to support countries to complete their clearance obligations.

The first area of work, the donor coordination study identified ways the MASG could be more proactive in coordinating the work of its members, through initiatives such as joint assessments, information exchange, joint monitoring and evaluations.

- Building on this work, the MASG secretariat is also undertaking a review of donor mine action policies, strategies, and commitments.
- This review will help to better understand donor priorities and donor funding allocations and modalities for mine action. It is also intended to promote coordination of our collective effort.
- The results of the review will be presented at the next MASG meeting scheduled for 18 October in New York. We also propose to share this information with the Mine Ban Convention Platform for Partnerships that has recently been established and the proposed cooperation portal under this Convention.

The aim of the second area of work is to consider how the MASG may contribute to the “Completion Initiative” established by the UN, to effectively assist affected countries to complete their mine action work, including meeting their obligations under the *Mine Ban Convention* and *Convention on Cluster Munition*.

- A number of MASG members are interested in the “Completion Initiative”, particularly as the declaration of completion is **a strong indicator of the success of mine action**, helps to **maintain the profile** of mine action and reduce the need for extension requests.
- The MASG will continue to support the UN to continue its work on developing a **database of the support required by countries nearing completion**, with the aim of identifying and working together to maintain support for countries requiring focussed assistance to achieve completion.
- Australia welcomes the Coordinator’s proposal to establish an online Cooperation Portal to facilitate communication between state parties on international cooperation and assistance and thanks the coordinators for their initiative and efforts to establish the portal.
- We welcome and encourage linkages between the proposed portal and what is already underway under the Mine Ban Convention.

- We look forward to continuing to work with State Parties, UN agencies, implementing partners and other donors to assist States in meeting their obligations under the Convention.