

## **Convention on Cluster Munitions**

### **Victim Assistance (Article 5)**

#### **Statement by Australia**

- . Australia would like to thank the Coordinators for their work and leadership on victim assistance over the past year.
- . Australia is pleased to be nominated for the role of Co-Coordinator of the Working group on Victim Assistance for the next two years.
  - We will focus on facilitating practical measures which will help States parties progress their obligations to provide victim assistance.
  - We look forward to working with Mexico in the first year of this role.
  - We welcome suggestions from all State Parties in relation to victim assistance and the topics they would like to progress over the next two years.
- . Australia remains committed to improving the quality of life for victims of explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions.
  - Victim assistance is a significant focus of Australia's mine action assistance, comprising approximately 20 per cent of our mine action funding over the past few years.
  - Australia has prioritised initiatives that develop and integrate services for victims and other people with disability, into national policies and programs.
  - Australia has also been working with partners to support the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, with an emphasis on improving well-being and livelihoods.
- . Australia's approach to victim assistance funding is to focus on building appropriate and sustained capacities within affected states to address both the immediate and the long-term challenges of victim assistance.
  - In order to enhance its sustainability, we are seeking to ensure that our victim assistance efforts are integrated within national level health and disability programs.
- . In addition, through its \$5 billion annual aid program, Australia has also provided significant but less quantifiable levels of indirect victim assistance through the support it provides to strengthening the capacity of national health and socio-economic development programs.
- . Australia's programming in disability follows the twin-track approach.
  - This aims to balance both disability-specific programs to specifically increase participation and services; and disability-inclusive programs to include a disability perspective so that all aid interventions and programs are made accessible to people with disability.

Mr President

- . Disability-inclusive development is good practice development, contributing to poverty alleviation and improved economic outcomes, stability and prosperity.
- . We consider that to be effective in reducing poverty, international development assistance must actively include and benefit people with disability.

- . Through the aid program, Australia will continue to work with partners to tackle the stigma that surrounds disability, which can be one of the largest barriers to full participation in community and economic life.
  - We will promote disability-inclusive education, help remove physical barriers through our investments in infrastructure, and enable people with disability to access services.
  - And we will continue to support disabled people's organisations in developing countries which play a vital role in giving people with disability a voice.
- . Australia is developing a new strategy to ensure that people with disability play an active and central role in Australia's aid program beyond 2015.
- . Whether we label our support "victim assistance" or not, we should recognise that States Parties may be fulfilling obligations to provide assistance for victims in a variety of different ways and with a variety of different labels.
  - What is important is that our support makes a difference, be it in the short term or in the longer, and in the most sustainable way through institution building and capacity support.
- . Looking forward, we need to balance ongoing conversations of victim assistance in the context of this Convention, with efforts to take our messages beyond this Convention and to engage a wider range of actors
  - This does not diminish the obligations set by this Convention, but rather could provide practical opportunities for States parties to more effectively deliver assistance to victims or to support such national efforts.

Finally Mr President

- . Australia will continue to look for opportunities to better utilise scarce resources to meet the Convention's promise to assist victims.
- . Australia encourages affected States, with support from development partners, to proactively assess and integrate victim assistance requirements into national plans that address disability, healthcare, rehabilitation, social services and employment.
  - The integration and enhancement of victim assistance into broader national policies will help ensure that victim assistance is addressed by national institutions and predictably funded into the future.
- . We encourage State Parties to provide adequate and sustainable support for the victims and support the integration of victim assistance into broader disability frameworks.

I thank you