



Convention on Cluster Munitions

Intersessional Meeting – April 2012

CLEARANCE AND RISK REDUCTION

Statement by Australia

19 April 2012

Statement delivered by Ms Merinda Petersen, Intern, Australian Permanent Mission, Geneva

Thank you Mr. Coordinator.

Australia thanks Ireland and Lao People's Democratic Republic for their leadership on clearance and risk reduction, and for their preparations for today's meeting. We offer them our full support. We also thank the panellists for their presentations.

Cluster munition remnants can pose a serious threat to all people who come into contact with them. The risks are well known and understood internationally. As the CCM itself states in the preamble 'Cluster munition remnants kill or maim civilians, obstruct economic development, including through loss of livelihood, impede post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, delay or prevent the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, can negatively impact on national and international peace-building and humanitarian assistance efforts, and have other severe consequences that can persist for many years after use'.

Although the main responsibility for achieving obligations under Article 4 rests with national governments, Australia is strongly committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Convention with respect to cooperation and assistance.

It is worth noting that like many donors and implementing operators, Australia takes a comprehensive approach to mine action. Australia does not differentiate between the

types of explosive remnants of war, including mines and cluster munitions, when undertaking clearance operations and risk education.

Depending on the country context, it will continue to be difficult in some circumstances to distinguish the funding we provide for cluster munition clearance and risk education from that we provide for clearance of anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war.

I have the pleasure to advise that Australia's support for the humanitarian objective of the Convention, includes a commitment for further funding for clearance. Australia continues to focus its support on significantly affected countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

We recognize that the cleanup effort in Laos is enormous with around one-third of land contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Australia has committed a further \$1 million through the Lao Unexploded Ordnance Trust Fund which is expected to enable the clearance of 2,200 hectares benefiting around 50,000 people.

Australia encourages States to implement their clearance obligations to ensure effective land release as soon as possible, and to demonstrate political commitment in this regard.

We welcome the progress made by many States in undertaking clearance. The clearance obligations of the Convention provide considerable humanitarian and developmental benefits. It is pleasing to hear that solid progress has been made or attention is being paid to address the humanitarian impact of contaminated areas.

Mr. Coordinator

At the 2MSP in Beirut last year, we were pleased to present a working paper, entitled the "Application of all available methods for the efficient implementation of Article 4". The working paper is on the topic of land release, which has been developed over the last few years as a means to improve the efficiency of implementation of clearance obligations. It was endorsed by the MSP, and its recommendations included the following:

- . In order to implement effectively Article 4 obligations under the Convention, all available and efficient measures to identify and remove the contamination of cluster munition remnants should be used, including non-technical survey, technical survey, and clearance;
- . States Parties are encouraged to review the efficiency of their approach to the identification and subsequent release of cluster munition-affected land and, if necessary, adjust the methodologies; and

- . States Parties are also encouraged, where they have not yet done so, to develop National Mine Action Standards, consistent with the International Mine Action Standards, on land release methodologies and techniques.

Mr. Coordinator,

Mine action is an essential humanitarian and development activity. Overall, Australia views impact and evaluation, maximisation of available resources, potential for land release and operational effectiveness as key issues when considering how to move forward in the area of clearance. In relation to resources, we encourage States to provide clear reports on their mine action problems, as a means to attract resources and to meet obligations under the CCM.

We will continue to encourage affected State Parties to implement their Article 4 obligations and commitments under the Vientiane Action Plan. We will also continue to offer our support through Australia's Mine Action Strategy initiatives.

Thank you.