

Convention on Cluster Munitions – April 2014 Intersessionals

Working group on victim assistance

Thank you Mr Coordinator

Australia appreciates the work undertaken by Afghanistan and Mexico in the area of victim assistance. We offer them our full support.

Australia fully recognises the devastating impacts that explosive remnants of war (ERW) have on individuals. Therefore, improving the quality of life for victims of explosive remnants of war, including landmines and cluster munitions, continues to be a significant focus of Australia's mine action assistance.

In providing victim assistance support, Australia does not discriminate against or among victims, between cluster munitions victims and other victims of armed conflict and other persons with disabilities. It is therefore difficult to separate and identify in precise terms our support for victims of cluster munitions from assistance provided for victims of other ERW and nor do we believe such separation is necessary as a matter of practice.

Over 20 per cent of Australia's mine action funding under its \$100 million mine action strategy has been attributed to victim assistance initiatives. This includes funding to support physical rehabilitation programs for victims and people with a disability through the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled and the Special Mine Action Appeal.

Australia has supported victim assistance work undertaken in a range of countries including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Chad and Uganda. In particular in Laos since 1998, Australian-funded victim assistance projects have helped 12,000 vulnerable people living in poverty in remote communities.

Australia's victim assistance support has increased access to rehabilitation services and helped people with disabilities to participate in community activities. Moreover, we believe that a national victims' survey will lead to a better unexploded ordnance information system management and improved coordination of responses.

Mr Coordinator

Australia's mine action and disability-inclusive development programs work closely to ensure both programs are of benefit to survivors and people with a disability and we will continue to advocate for greater linkages in international efforts on victim assistance and disability-inclusive development. Australia's support for national health programs also provides a substantial degree of additional support to victim assistance.

As a donor, Australia looks to support specific victim assistance initiatives that are integrated into broader development frameworks such as in the disability, health and social and economic sectors. This is also an important step in providing greater national and

donor priority to the issues of victim assistance and in attracting resourcing needed to build national capacities and sustain programs.

As an example, in 2011, Australia provided support for the publication entitled *Assisting Landmine and other ERW Survivors in the Context of Disarmament, Disability and Development* prepared by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's Implementation Support Unit.

We look forward to continue working with State Parties, UN agencies, implementing partners and other donors to assist States in meeting their victim assistance obligations under the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.