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**12th Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)
General Exchange of Views
Australia**

President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the 12th Meeting of States Parties and assure you of Australia's full support.

We would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate and welcome South Sudan on becoming the newest State Party – number 112. We hope others will follow its lead.

Australia is deeply concerned about the deteriorating and complex global security environment. More than two years on, we again condemn Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. More broadly, allegations of cluster munitions use in Ukraine and in Myanmar are seriously concerning.

The use of cluster munitions is reprehensible and the impacts of these munitions is harrowing. The CCM was born out of a collective determination to address the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by cluster munitions. According to the Cluster Munitions Monitor, in the first year of Russia's invasion of Ukraine there was an increase in deaths caused by cluster munitions of more than 750 per cent from the previous year, with civilians accounting for 95 per cent of casualties.

President,

As a State Party to the CCM, Australia is fully committed to the object and provisions of the Convention. We discourage the use, development,

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production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions by all States, including those not party to the CCM, as well as non-State actors. We remain steadfast in our determination to promote the humanitarian objectives of the Convention and the Lausanne Action Plan. Australia calls upon all States yet to do so to join the Convention without delay.

This year, for the first time, a State Party took steps towards withdrawing from the Convention. Australia recognises Russia's invasion of Ukraine is causing concern for States sharing a border with Russia. But now, more than ever, it is critical to uphold our international commitments in support of peace and security.

President,

Australia has fulfilled the role of transparency coordinator this cycle and looks forward to continuing in this role for the next year.

It is pleasing to see that global clearance of cluster munition-contaminated area increased by eight per cent from 2022 to 2023. In these challenging times, we must also commend those States for their notable achievements. We congratulate Bosnia-Herzegovina for completing the significant milestone of clearance of all known contaminated areas in 2023; and Peru, which completed the welcome destruction of its cluster munitions stockpiles ahead of its April 2024 deadline.

Australia is proud of our home-grown advances in technology which contribute to clearance, such as handheld devices which detect the molecular signature of landmines that are being deployed in partnership with NGOs in our region.

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Technology such as this will assist in safer and speedier clearance operations of landmines, but has broader applications in addressing cluster-munition contamination too.

Australia is committed to playing our part to help universalise and strengthen implementation of the Convention.

We are a proud contributor to the CCM Implementation Support Unit and to the CCM Sponsorship Program. Australia continues to work with Pacific Island partners to clear Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in our region.

In 2023, Australia supported clearance and risk education activities throughout the Indo-Pacific, including in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. These activities have contributed to clearance of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

We also continue to work with Pacific Island partners on World War II-era unexploded ordnance remediation and related capacity building.

President,

Australia commends the dedication and courage of those at the frontline of efforts to clear contaminated areas, destroy stockpiles, and provide risk education and victim assistance. We wish their efforts were not required but extend our gratitude for their tireless work.

Thank you.

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