



Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Oslo, 25-29 October 2019

Australian Comments on Cooperation and Assistance

Mr President,

International cooperation and assistance is vital to our efforts to support our collective landmine-free aspirations. In support of this aim, Australia considers clearing of mines – including improvised mines – to be a humanitarian imperative for the successful distribution of aid and safe return home of thousands of displaced people. We also support efforts by states parties to pursue work on stockpile management and encourage cooperation in capacity building and establishing best practice. We were very gratified to see Australia's support to the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes recognised in the acknowledgments section of the latest update.

Mr President,

Australia has provided over \$14 million in the 2018-19 financial year for explosive hazard reduction and victim assistance activities. This includes:

- UXO risk education and clearance activities in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Victim assistance in Cambodia, Syria and Myanmar;
- Support to global mine action, coordination and research organisations, including the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Development Program, Humanity and Inclusion, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, among others.

In addition, since 2015, Australia has invested over \$115.8 million to equip elements of the Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) with over 224,000 improvised explosive device (IED) electronic counter measure units.

- This is a complement to Australian Defence Force commitment to Afghanistan (known as Operation HIGHROAD), and its participation in the NATO-led Resolute Support mission.

Mr President,

In the health and disability context, Australia supports providing explosive hazard victim support through access to mainstream health and disability services. This approach aligns with national ownership, brings health-related victim assistance in line with best practice development assistance, and frees up resources for explosive hazard clearance.

For example, through the Disability Rights Initiative Cambodia (2013-2018), Australia supported Cambodia in with assistance to over 100,000 people with disability at 11 physical rehabilitation centres. 38% of these people were victims of landmines or explosive remnants of war.

- The Disability Rights Initiative Cambodia program has ended but a new disability and gender-based violence program, the Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services – ACCESS for short – is building on its work.

Mr President,

Circumstances remain where host Governments may be unable to provide victim assistance through health and disability services, particularly in humanitarian situations. In these cases, it is necessary that victim assistance is provided through those organisations with the specialist skills to do so.

For example, Australia funds UNMAS in Syria (\$8 million over 2018-2019) to deliver explosive hazards risk education and provide victim assistance for survivors and their families, among other vital humanitarian assistance measures. A further \$2 million was provided to international humanitarian organisations to support survivors, including by providing prosthetics and physical therapy.

In closing, Mr President, I assure you of our continued commitment to international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the impact of these injurious weapons.

Thank you Mr President.