

**Opening statement by John Sullivan, Assistant Secretary for the Arms Control Branch,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia**

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Vanuatu Welcome Statement

Australia is delighted to sponsor GICHD to present its Small States Strategy Workshop in the Pacific, and I congratulate Kerry Brinkert and his team for having made the arrangements for getting us all here, ably assisted by the Vanuatu MFA and the Australian High Commission.

In addition to colleagues from the Pacific Island Countries, I would also like to welcome expert participants from the ICRC, UNDP, and the International Campaign to ban Landmines.

With now 153 States Parties, the Mine-Ban Convention has the highest membership of all conventional arms control treaties. It is encouraging that this membership already includes the majority of the Pacific Island Countries.

But universalisation of the Convention is about more than simply ratification or accession, or even a government taking the political and military decision not to use anti-personnel mines. The Convention includes specific obligations for all States Parties, whether or not they are mine-affected. All States Parties must take appropriate legal and administrative steps to enforce the prohibitions in the Convention, and also prepare an annual transparency report.

As noted in the workshop concept paper, how can a small State with limited means comply with its obligations? And, to paraphrase, why should such a State which is not mine-affected care? These are the key questions which we will address over the next two days, and I hope we will arrive at practical, regionally appropriate solutions to overcoming the challenges faced by Pacific Island Countries in implementing their obligations.

We are particularly grateful to Vanuatu for offering to host this workshop, and look forward to hearing about their experiences when they ratified the Convention in 2005. The success of this workshop depends fundamentally on the active participation of all participants. To this end, my co-chair and I will keep proceedings at a very informal level in order to facilitate as much free exchange as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all a stimulating and productive workshop as we work together to find practical solutions to our shared challenges.