

**ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION INTERSESSIONAL
MEETINGS, 19-20 MAY 2016**

COMMITTEE ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE

STATEMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Mr Chair,

With your permission, I will speak first in Australia's capacity as Coordinator on Victim Assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), and second in our national capacity.

As CCM Coordinator on Victim Assistance, we commend the initiative shown by the Mine Ban Convention (MBC) Victim Assistance Committee in convening a meeting in February 2016 with the Victim Assistance Coordinators under the CCM and Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), to share information on our priorities under our respective treaties and to strengthen coordination on our activities. We look forward to further opportunities to exchange views and coordinate our efforts in the future, building on the principle that the needs of victims are the same regardless of the weapon that has caused their injury.

Mr Chair,

Consistent with this principle, the CCM Coordinators on Victim Assistance and the CCM Coordinators on Cooperation and Assistance, with technical support from Handicap International, are working this year on an initiative to develop Guidance for states on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance, an approach to which states commit under both the Maputo and Dubrovnik Action Plans, and which is crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of victim assistance.

To this end, we hosted a workshop on the integrated approach yesterday, Wednesday May 18th 2016, here in Geneva. At the workshop representatives of 23 affected and donor states – parties to one or a combination of the CCM, the MBC and Protocol V - together with representatives of 10 international and non-government organisations, shared views on national examples of good practices and challenges in implementing an integrated approach to victim assistance. The input from states at the workshop, together with responses to questionnaires circulated by the Coordinators to these and other states earlier in the year, will be used to prepare guidance on the implementation of the integrated approach which the Coordinators plan to release later in the year. Our hope is that this will be a useful tool that can be implemented across the conventions.

Mr Chair,

Victim assistance which is at the heart of Australia's global mine action program. We are committed to improving the quality of life for victims of landmine, cluster munition and explosive remnant of war (ERW) incidents, globally. Victim assistance comprises approximately 20 per cent of our global mine action funding.

Australia understands that to meet our treaty commitments to victims, and indeed all people with disabilities, we need to do two things in parallel. Our development assistance needs to include specific programs for survivors, which are also accessible to other people with disabilities. Our development assistance also needs to include programs to ensure the needs of survivors as well as all other people with disabilities are addressed in national level policies and programs. We know this is critically important to ensuring the needs of victims will continue to be met in the long term, because victims needs endure long after landmine, cluster munition and ERW clearance is completed. This is the integrated approach to victim assistance.

For this reason, Australia's approach to victim assistance follows a twin-track approach: we aim to have both disability-specific programs which target victims, and a mainstream approach, which enables all people with disabilities to participate in and benefit from all our aid investments across all sectors.

Australia's recognition of the importance of ensuring our development assistance meets the needs of survivors, together with all people with disabilities, is comprehensively reflected in Development for All 2015-2020. This is our second disability-inclusive development strategy which aims to strengthen disability inclusion across our aid program, in order to improve the quality of life for all people with disabilities. Under this strategy, Australia will provide specific support for victims to find pathways out of poverty and realise their potential through a range of concrete measures.

Thank you Mr Chair.