



ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

2012 Intersessional Meetings

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Statement by Australia

25 May 2012

Statement delivered by Ms Christine Pahlman, Mine Action Coordinator, Australian Agency for International Development

Excellencies, distinguished delegates

As a state in a position to assist, Australia is increasingly focusing its efforts on ensuring our development cooperation builds appropriate and sustained capacities within affected states to address both the immediate and the long-term challenges of victim assistance. It is increasingly evident that for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable they will need to be integrated with broader health and disability plans and programs. Disability and victim assistance needs to be integrated into national programs and discussed within the context of broader bilateral and multilateral cooperation to attract the priority and resourcing required to build national capacities and sustain programs.

As a donor, the first challenge we often face in programming funding for victim assistance is that a disability or victim assistance perspective is not highlighted as a priority development issue for donor assistance at the national level by affected governments. As our funding for victim assistance is primarily drawn from our bilateral aid budgets, victim assistance and disability work must be presented as a priority for bilateral aid assistance to enable the Australian aid program to assist. We therefore encourage the inclusion and mainstreaming of disability / victim assistance perspectives in national development planning and development cooperation dialogues.

The publication, *Assisting Landmine and other Explosive Remnants of War Survivors in the Context of Disarmament, Disability and Development*, serves to remind us that used as a framework, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (CRPD) will ensure a comprehensive approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities through the

promotion and protection of rights. Australia is proud to be assisting Cambodia to develop a new National Disability Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018. This presents an opportunity for Cambodia to use the CRPD as the guiding framework to develop the new Strategic Plan; particularly given the intention to ratify. This will ensure a more comprehensive approach as it expands on the victim assistance framework of the Convention. Existing governance and coordination mechanisms will be used for this process.

Under its mine action strategy for the Australian aid program, Australia has so far committed \$84.981 million to mine action since 1 January 2010. Of this, approximately \$18.468 million or 21.7 per cent has been allocated to victim assistance. We will continue to prioritise victim assistance going forward. Our funding under our mine action strategy has supported victim assistance in Burundi, Cambodia, Laos, Uganda, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the DRC.

Australia is also supporting victim assistance efforts in a broader range of countries through supporting the victim assistance work of the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as other victim assistance initiatives which have a global reach. Since we last met at the 11th Meeting of States Parties, Australia has committed \$3 million through the International Committee of the Red Cross 2012 Special Mine Action Appeal to support victim assistance including rehabilitation and reintegration work.

In addition to funding victim assistance work, Australia also increasingly focuses on supporting people with a disability. Australia aims to improve the reach and effectiveness of development assistance by ensuring that people with disabilities are included in, contribute to and benefit equally from development efforts. Funding for work under the strategy is expected to be over \$140 million between 2008 and 2015. This includes around \$80 million for improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.