

Mine Clearance and Mine Risk Education Australian Statement

Thank you Co-Chairs

Article 5 mine clearance obligations are central to the fulfilment of the Convention's humanitarian aims. It is only by clearing land contaminated by mines and other explosive remnants of war, that it can be released back to communities to be accessed, used and developed to support livelihoods and communities.

While primary responsibility rests with mine-affected states to comply with Article 5, all states must play a role in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention – to provide assistance and cooperation.

For many years, Australia has made significant investments to help realise the Convention's aims in this regard.

In 2008-09, we expect to contribute around A\$8.8 million to support mine clearance activities. Our assistance is directed towards de-mining, marking, surveys, mine action planning and mine risk education.

For example, we provided A\$10 million over 2 years to a community-based mine clearance program on Afghanistan's border with Pakistan and within the province of Oruzgan. This year, we will provide A\$2 million to the UNDP Clearing for Results Program in Cambodia. Australia has also contributed A\$2 million over two years for clearing explosive remnants of war in southern Iraq.

Co-Chairs

As you mentioned in your Progress Report, we are now wiser than we were at the First Review Conference regarding the status of Article 5 implementation. Five years ago we hoped that hardly any states would require an extension to their Article 5 deadlines. I would agree with your assessment that we are "*sadly*, wiser".

However, we are pleased that under Australia's presidency of the 7MSP, a transparent and vigorous process for dealing with extension requests could be agreed.

This year, Australia is again actively participating in the work of the Analysing Group and we encourage those three states which have requested an extension to work with this Group closely to ensure the fulfilment of the Convention's aims.

We urge the 18 states that have now sought an extension, to continue with their efforts to complete clearance "as soon as possible", as required in Article 5 of the Convention. And we remind states parties in a position to do so, to assist these states in meeting their obligations.

Australia was very encouraged to hear yesterday that a number of states parties are close to completing mine clearance in their countries. We encourage your continued commitment towards this objective, particularly in the lead-up to the Cartagena Summit.

We particularly congratulate Tunisia for being able to announce yesterday fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5.

Co-Chairs

We take this opportunity to comment on the non-paper on lessons learned in mine risk education, circulated yesterday. We agree that mine risk education can serve a variety of purposes, which reinforce efforts under other mine action pillars.

We have learnt this lesson, particularly through projects we have supported in Afghanistan and Iraq, which combine mine clearance activities with risk reduction education, and involve local communities in planning and implementation.

Australia looks forward to further discussing the importance of mine risk education in the lead up to Cartagena.

Thank you.