

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE
PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND
ON THEIR DESTRUCTION (11MSP)

Statement by Australia and Uganda as Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and
Socio-Economic Reintegration

Phnom Penh, Cambodia
29 November 2011

Mr President
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties (10MSP) in Geneva last year, Australia and Uganda were honoured to have been nominated to serve as Co-Chairs of this important Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration.

In our first joint statement as Co-Chairs at the 10MSP, we recalled our commitment to continue the work of our predecessors to ensure the successful implementation of the Convention and to facilitate concrete progress in achieving the aims of the Cartagena Action Plan within the States Parties that have reported responsibility for significant number of landmine survivors. Further, we identified a number of priorities for our term as Co-Chairs. Foremost amongst these are accessibility including physical access and access to services.

To ensure a focus on these areas, we, as Co-Chairs, organised parallel programmes for victim assistance/disability experts for the June 2011 meetings of the Standing Committees. During this week of 11MSP meetings we are also convening a programme for victim assistance/disability experts. This weeks program focuses specifically on accessibility.

Through these parallel programmes, experts have the opportunity to exchange experiences and share lessons learnt. We have even seen the commitment of States at a high level, for example, just yesterday the Minister of the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth (MoSVY) addressed the Parallel Programme.

We have introduced a feedback mechanism for parallel programmes to ensure that these programmes are meeting the needs of those they are intending to serve. So far, feedback has been positive.

As Co-Chairs, we are pleased to have been fully engaged in these programmes. Through this, we have advanced our own dialogue with victim assistance experts from relevant States Parties and have had the opportunity to listen to their challenges and try to identify ways in which we can assist them to meet their obligation to survivors.

Throughout our term as Co-Chairs, efforts and activities were undertaken based on the logic that States reporting significant numbers of survivors are responsible for meeting the rights and need of those

survivors. Therefore, we made every effort to promote national ownership, build understanding and capacity and, where possible, by providing support to the relevant States Parties.

Due to the reduced capacity of the Implementation Support Unit to provide technical assistance, the number of State Parties that received technical support of Victim Assistance was reduced during 2011. The four States include Burundi who requested assistance to support an inter-ministerial effort to develop a national action plan on disability that incorporates an appropriate response to meeting the needs of landmine survivors; Iraq, where we supported a national workshop on victim assistance in the context of disarmament, disability and development; Afghanistan, where assistance was requested in developing tools for reporting on disability activities in Afghanistan; and finally here in the Kingdom of Cambodia as they undertake an assessment of the implementation of the 2009-2011 National Plan of Action on Disability and acquire input on developing a subsequent plan.

In recognition of the need to ensure adequate international cooperation and assistance as concerns victim assistance, the Co-Chairs were pleased to support the Chair of the new Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance, by contributing to the international symposium of cooperation and assistance as concerns victim assistance which took place in Tirana in May this year.

The need to enhance cooperation and assistance leads us to recall the excellent cooperation with partners that we have continued to nurture throughout our term as Co-Chairs. We have worked closely with UN organisations such as the WHO who joined us in June 2011 for the Geneva launch of the World Report on Disability. We have also worked closely with the ICRC, the ICBL, Handicap International as well as other organisations which have made a valuable contribution to the victim assistance parallel programs over the past year.

In order to promote a clear and unequivocal message is being sent regarding the States Parties understandings on victim assistance, the Co-Chairs were pleased to endorse the (Australian sponsored) publication entitled *Assisting landmine and other ERW survivors in the context of disarmament, disability and development* which sets out a comprehensive approach to achieving the aims of the Convention in a manner that promotes sustainable actions and avoids the duplication of efforts.

To conclude, we would like to reiterate our commitment to this issue. Our efforts to assist the survivors of landmines and other ERW do not end here with the end of our term as Co-Chairs. Both Australia and Uganda are committed to continuing efforts to assist survivors in our respective national capacities but with the added benefit of having served on this Standing Committee for the past two years.

We encourage affected States, international agencies, non governmental organisations, the donor community, civil society and the survivors themselves to also continue working together to improve the quality of daily life of mine survivors, victims of other war-related injuries, and all persons with disabilities.

As our term as Co-Chair of this Standing Committee is unfortunately at an end, we would like to welcome Algeria and Croatia who will carry the flag after us.

We cannot end our Co-Chair ship of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration without saying thank you to the Implementation Support Unit for all their support during the year.

Before I finish I would like to take the opportunity to invite each of you to join us at the Cambodiana Hotel this evening at 6pm sharp – for an evening reception that will showcase inclusive arts and culture. Appetisers and refreshments will be served, and there will be plenty of opportunity to purchase handmade souvenirs and gifts made by Cambodian Artisans. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Thank you Mr President.