

**ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION 15TH MEETING OF STATES
PARTIES**

STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR (AUSTRALIA)

Madam President,

Australia has been pleased to serve as Sponsorship Programme Coordinator again in 2016. At the outset, we wish to thank Director Juan Carlos Ruan and Sophie Delfolie of the Implementation Support Unit, together with Susanne Rihs Aeby of the Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining, for the extensive support provided to us in the administration of the Programme.

The Sponsorship Programme is essential to the work of the Convention. It enables participation in the meetings of the Convention and direct interaction with the Convention's Committees by capital and field-based experts from States Parties with limited means. Such participation helps these experts coordinate their countries' implementation of their mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance obligations.

Madam President,

As we reported at the MBC Pledging Conference in March and at the Intersessional Meetings in May, although the Programme funded the participation of 30 delegates to Convention meetings in 2015, due to lack of new contributions to the Programme's funds in 2015, the Programme began the year with only enough funds to support a very small number of delegates for 2016. We had foreshadowed this serious financial situation at the 14th Meeting of States Parties in December last year, and reiterated it in our joint letters with you, Madam President, sent to all States Parties in January this year.

In an effort to secure sufficient funds to ensure the sponsorship of as many delegates as possible to the Intersessional Meetings in May and to this 15th Meeting of States Parties, we have made a number of appeals for

contribution throughout the year. We sent a further joint letter with you, Madam President, to all States Parties in March following the Pledging Conference; we met with recent donors to the Programme in June, and we sent a final joint letter with you, Madam President, to all recent donors in July.

We are pleased to report that in response to these appeals, throughout the year, we have received new contributions to the programme from Chile, Switzerland, Austria and Turkey, in addition to Australia's annual contribution to the Programme. We wish to thank our fellow donors for their generosity. These contributions have totalled CHF39,080. This amount does not include Australia's annual contribution for 2016 and an expected additional contribution to the Programme from another State Party.

Madam President,

On the basis of the funds received, invitations were issued to 7 States Parties to sponsor up to 7 delegates to attend the Intersessional Meeting in May: six for matters relating to mine clearance; and one for matters relating to universalization.

Of those invited, one did not nominate a delegate for sponsorship, one declined the invitation for sponsorship, and 5 accepted sponsorship and have delegates present at this meeting, namely Angola, Niger, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.

In addition, the Sponsorship Programme was able to support the participation in the Intersessional meeting of victim assistance experts sponsored by Australia to attend the 18 May Geneva workshop on Victim Assistance organised by the Convention on Cluster Munitions Coordinators on Victim Assistance and Cooperation and Assistance. The costs of extending the stay of victim assistance experts from four States Parties (Cambodia, DRC, Mozambique and Tajikistan) were covered by the Sponsorship Programme.

The total cost of sponsorship for the Intersessional Meetings was CHF12,545 including CHF10,514 for full sponsorship and CHF2,031 partial sponsorship for victim assistance experts.

Madam President,

Our objective had been to support at least 20 delegates to attend the 15th Meeting of States Parties. Regrettably, even with the generous contributions of Chile, Switzerland, Austria and Turkey, we were only in a position to issue invitations to 18 delegates: 16 for matters relating to mine clearance; and one for matters relating to universalisation.

Of those invited, five did not nominate a delegate for sponsorship or declined the invitation. A further three who had accepted sponsorship were ultimately unable to travel to the 15th Meeting of States Parties for a mixture of personal and administrative reasons. Ultimately, 10 delegates of States Parties have been sponsored to attend the meeting, from Angola, Cambodia, Chad, DRC, Niger, Senegal, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. The total approximate cost of the participation of these delegates is around CHF37,000, at an average cost of CHF3,700 per delegate.

Madam President

In summary, the Sponsorship Programme has supported only 19 delegates to attend meetings of the Convention this year, compared to 30 delegates last year.

While this does represent a disturbing decline, we note that the lower-than-expected take-up of offers of sponsorship for the 15th Meeting of States Parties, together with additional funds pledged to the programme but not yet received, will ensure that we will begin 2017 in a stronger position than we began this year.

However, we would urge against complacency. To avoid the situation faced this year, in which numerous appeals were needed to secure the funding required to support the small number of delegates sponsored to attend the Intersessional meetings and this Meeting of States Parties, we would encourage all States Parties to consider including pledges to the

Sponsorship Programme in the pledges they will make at next year's Pledging Conference. For example, those States Parties who make voluntary contributions to the Implementation Support Unit each year could consider allocating a small proportion of their funding to the Sponsorship Programme. Doing so on an annual basis would guarantee some stability and predictability for the Programme.

Madam President

We have all seen the direct benefit of the Sponsorship Programme through the extensive engagement of sponsored delegates in our proceedings at this meeting, in particular through their interaction in plenary with the Committee on Article 5 implementation, with the Committee on Cooperative Compliance, with you on the issue of stockpile destruction and with the Committee on Victim Assistance.

The Sponsorship Programme plays a critical role in ensuring that all States Parties – and in particular those with limited resource capacity and with whom the Convention Committees need to engage on implementation of clearance and stockpile destruction obligations – have the opportunity to attend the meetings of the Convention. In this respect it is a key tool supporting implementation and universalisation of the Convention. We urge all States Parties with the capacity to do so to contribute to the Programme.

Thank you Madam President.