

**ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION 16TH MEETING OF STATES
PARTIES**

STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR (AUSTRALIA)

Mr President,

Australia has been pleased to serve as Sponsorship Programme Coordinator again in 2017.

In the interests of time, in this statement we present only an abridged report of the operation of the Sponsorship Programme. We will submit a full report to the Implementation Support Unit to be made available online.

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.

Mr President,

As we reported at the Intersessional Meetings of the Convention in June, the Programme received only a limited number of contributions in 2016.

Although the Programme funded the participation of 30 delegates to Convention meetings in 2015, due to the limited number of contributions to the Programme's funds in 2016, the Programme was able to support only 19

delegates to Convention meetings in 2016. Nine delegates were supported to attend the Intersessional Meetings in May for matters relating to mine clearance and victim assistance, and ten delegates were sponsored to attend the Meeting of States Parties in December.

But thanks to the ongoing support of a small number of donors - namely Austria, Chile, France, Switzerland, Turkey and Australia – the Programme commenced 2017 with just under CHF40,000 available to it.

In February, a joint letter from Austria, as the Presidency, and Australia, as Sponsorship Coordinator, was sent to all current and recent donors appealing for further contributions to the Programme. A further appeal for contributions was made at the Pledging Conference at the end of February. Following those appeals, the Programme has received additional contributions and pledges from Turkey, Switzerland and Austria, bringing the total available to the Programme in the first six months of the year to just over CHF 67,000.

On this basis, and on the advice of the ISU, the Donor Group agreed to offer sponsorship to 12 delegates to attend these Intersessional meetings. Offers were made to delegates from countries submitting Article 5 extension requests, delegates from countries due to submit workplans in support of Article 5 clearance commitments, and delegates with Article 5 deadlines in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Of the offers made, the following ten countries took up sponsorship and had delegates attending these Intersessional Meetings: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Sri Lanka , Sudan, Yemen and Zimbabwe. I also would like to note that generous additional funding was provided by the GICHD to enable eight of the ten sponsored delegates to attend the Land Release event held immediately preceding the Intersessional Meetings.

The total cost to the Programme of the Intersessional Meetings was just over CHF 20,000.

Mr President,

I am pleased to say that in response to the appeals I made at the Intersessional Meetings and in a letter sent to all States Parties in August, two additional donors have joined the Sponsorship Programme in the second half of the year. Croatia and the Netherlands have both made generous contributions to the Programme – in the case of the Netherlands, through a most welcome multi-year commitment.

Together with Australia's annual contribution, this lifted the funds available to the Sponsorship Programme to around CHF 87,000 ahead of this 16th MSP.

Our objective for this MSP was to support at least 20 delegates to attend. With this in mind, in consultation with the Donor Group we issued a total of 26 invitations to take up sponsorship for this MSP:

- three to delegates from countries with extension requests to be considered at this meeting;
- four to countries which have submitted or are obliged to submit updated work plans for their Article 5 mine clearance commitments for consideration at this MSP;
- two to countries that will need to submit requests for extension of their mine clearance deadlines in 2018;
- one to a country close to completion of its Article 5 obligations;
- ten to other countries in the process of implementing Article 5 obligations;

- four to countries giving serious consideration to joining the convention; and
- two to support the attendance of one of our expert panellists.

Of those invited, 9 did not nominate a delegate for sponsorship or declined the invitation or were ultimately unable to travel to the Meeting of States Parties for a mixture of personal and administrative reasons. Ultimately, 17 delegates have been sponsored to attend the meeting. The total approximate cost of the participation of these delegates is around CHF46,000, at an average cost of around CHF2,700 per delegate.

Mr President

In summary, the Sponsorship Programme has supported 27 delegates to attend meetings of the Convention this year, compared to 19 delegates last year.

We are very pleased that the trend toward fewer contributions and lower numbers of sponsored delegates we experienced in 2015 and 2016 has at last been reversed, thanks to the generosity of our small group of committed donors. We wish to thank again Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Turkey and Switzerland for joining Australia in contributing to the Sponsorship Programme in 2017. We would note also that the lower-than-expected take-up of offers of sponsorship for this Meeting of States Parties means the Sponsorship Programme will carry around CHF41,000 into 2018, providing it with a solid base for the new year.

However, we would urge against complacency. To avoid the situation faced over the past two years, in which numerous appeals were needed to secure the funding required to support relatively small numbers of delegates to

attend the intersessional meetings and Meetings 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.

Mr 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 Mr President.