



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,
Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Sponsorship Programme - Donors Group
Update

Statement by John Wattam (UK)
Programme Co-ordinator
at the
Standing Committee on the General Status & Operation of the
Convention

17 September 2003



Fifth Meeting of States Parties,
Bangkok 15-19 September 2003

**Statement by the United Kingdom
on behalf of the Sponsorship Programme
Donors Group**

**(Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the
Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom)**

The Programme Co-ordinator, John Wattam, cannot join us in Bangkok for the Fifth Meeting of States Parties. He has asked that I make the following statement on behalf of the Donors.

Mr Chairman,

As we have already heard from many speakers, our commitment to the Mine Ban Convention is making a real difference and positive impact on people's lives. The Sponsorship Programme is an integral and invaluable tool in that process and has an excellent and well-deserved reputation. Often taken for granted, it is an understated success that facilitates and underscores the important dialogue on assistance, co-operation and implementation of the Convention.

Constituted in 2000, it has remained true to its aims of supporting the attendance of those countries, usually most-affected by landmines, but least able to afford to come to these and the intersessional meetings. It has also helped a number of speakers who would otherwise be unable to make their presentations. As of September 2003, the Group of Donors contributing to the Sponsorship Programme are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

This has been a good year for the Sponsorship Programme. Timely contributions from Donors, clear priorities - with a particular focus on stockpile destruction - and efficient administration of the Programme by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining (GICHD), have made a significant difference to the level of attendance and quality of engagement at both the February and May intersessional meetings and, now, at this Fifth Meeting of States Parties.

The Sponsorship Programme Package covers all travel costs at economy class or the most economical rate, hotel accommodation of our choosing and an appropriate per diem. In February, a total of 68 delegates from 54 countries and one guest speaker participated in the programme at an average cost of Swiss Francs 3,313. At the May meeting we assisted 72 delegates from 51 countries and 3 guest speakers at an average cost of Swiss Francs 3,321. At this meeting, we are on course to have supported 80+ delegates - which includes many new faces from the region - emphasising not only the importance the Donors Group attach to the first meeting of States Parties to the Convention in Asia, but acknowledging this area as one of the most mine-affected areas of the world. The costs for this meeting have been covered but

additional pledges and contributions will be needed to sustain the Programme in 2004. We call on those States Parties who are in a position to do so to come forward and make a financial contribution.

All involved with the Sponsorship Programme are committed to the high standards it has set. We have budgetary constraints but will continue to do all we can to provide assistance where it is genuinely needed. Of course we cannot satisfy everyone's demands. For this meeting 20+ applications were rejected - primarily because they failed to meet the submission deadline or because Donors needed further reassurance that the applications were consistent with the Convention's most pressing implementation challenges. There is a careful balance to be struck between funds for mine action and funds to support participation in the work of the Convention. We need to ensure that sponsorship resources are used equitably to ensure as widespread and sustainable participation as possible.

At the May intersessional, we stressed the importance of active, on-going, engagement for Donors and recipients alike. We also placed the onus on States Parties to make the process their own. The message has not changed. The Donors Group look to those of you supported by the Programme, to return the favour by interacting and fully participating in the meeting and its side events. In short, make the most of what our week together has to offer and then go home and make the Convention work for you and demonstrate that our investment has not been in vain.

Looking ahead, this meeting sets the course for the Review Conference in November next year. Before then, there will be the usual intersessional meetings coupled with Preparatory Committees, but the Donors Group will also need to start to give some thought to the sustainability and desirability of the Programme in its current format. It will need to reinvent itself and reassess its goals if it is to meet successfully the challenges that lie ahead from 2004-2009. This issue will be on the agenda of the Donors Group in their first meeting after Bangkok early in November. We look forward to working on this with the President-Designate of the Review Conference, Ambassador Petritsch of Austria.

The success of the Programme in meeting its objectives falls to many and would not be possible without the efforts of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining (GICHD), particularly Catherine Borrero, in administering the Programme - at no additional cost to the Programmes donors. We thank her, the ISU and the Centre for their advice and information.

In closing, on a personal note, John Wattam has asked me to pass on his good wishes to all, especially the beneficiaries of the Programme for a successful meeting.