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Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
Cartagena Summit on a Mine Free World
High Level Segment

Statement by Australia

Cartagena, Colombia

3 December 2009

Madam President
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates

On behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to express our warm appreciation to Colombia for hosting this important Summit. We recognise that Colombia is badly affected by landmine contamination and we look forward to working with you, and others, to deliver on the promise of a mine-free world.

I would also like to extend Australia's gratitude to Norway for its role as President of this Summit and for its historic leadership in the development of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Together Norway and Colombia have successfully guided preparations for the Second Review Conference.

That so many countries are represented here is a measure of the international commitment to a mine-free world.

Landmines, cluster munitions, and unexploded ordnance do not figure in the daily lives of Australians. Yet we understand the terrible impact these weapons have on people who have done no more than walk in their fields, or in the case of a child, innocently pick up an unfamiliar object.

Madam President

Australia has been a strong advocate for the Mine Ban Convention.

We have promoted and encouraged countries to participate in this important instrument. We have also actively supported the institutions that shape and take forward the Convention.

Australia was proud to serve as President of the seventh Meeting of States Parties in September 2006.

In doing so, we played a major role in developing a successful process for considering extension requests of clearance obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

We have also served in a number of leadership roles in Convention Standing Committees over the past five years. Most recently, this was as co-Rapporteur and then co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies from 2007 to 2009.

In addition to these roles, Australia has taken its cooperation and assistance obligations under the Convention very seriously.

For the past twelve years Australia has worked with partner countries and organisations to clear and restore contaminated land and to help victims and their families rebuild their lives and their livelihoods.

And more recently we were proud to sign the historic Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008, as one of the original signatories.

We have also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which sets out the fundamental rights of people with disability, and applies to victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Madam President

We willingly take on the obligations that these instruments collectively impose on us because we believe that in the 21st century, people should not be subject to the misery caused by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive devices.

There can be no reasonable justification for their impact on civilians, particularly those who are among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the world.

Australia's assistance – over \$175 million since 1997 – has helped restore millions of square metres of mined land in Cambodia and Laos, making it available again for agricultural use and economic development.

With the Red Cross we have provided thousands of Cambodians with prostheses, wheelchairs and opportunities for education and for livelihoods.

Further afield in Afghanistan and Iraq, we are helping to destroy remnants of war, on millions of square metres of land, allowing children to return to school and farms to be cultivated.

And in Africa, we have helped to educate local communities about the risks of landmines and supported mine clearance in Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Australia's contribution to date has been significant but we now look ahead, as do all of us represented here, to the challenges of the next five years. Our assistance will be guided by the outcomes from Cartagena.

The past few days have enabled us to assess the progress that has been made globally under the Convention.

There is much of which we can be proud. But, as we have heard, there are many challenges which remain before a mine-free world can be achieved.

Madam President

Australia's future assistance will be guided by the new *Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program 2010 to 2014*.

I'm delighted to inform you that Australia's strategy will be supported by \$100 million of development assistance funding.

This strategy was launched two weeks ago in Australia by our Foreign Affairs Minister, Stephen Smith. And this morning, I was pleased to hold the international launch of this Australian commitment.

The strategy will incorporate our new obligations under the two international conventions I referred to earlier – cluster munitions and disability. It recognises the wider dimensions to mine action such as peace building, gender and development issues.

The strategy has one goal and that is to reduce the threat and socioeconomic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

Through the strategy we want to reduce the number of deaths from these weapons, we want to achieve a better quality of life for the victims, their families and communities.

And we want to encourage and support countries to take greater control of their own mine action programs.

Our strategy contains a geographic focus on Asia and the Pacific, with a flexibility to respond to emerging priorities in other countries and regions.

Australia is deepening its engagement in Latin America, including in development, and will be giving consideration to appropriate assistance to regional countries in the future.

Australia's funding for mine action is in addition to the added resources we are making available to raise the profile of disability globally and to action disability-inclusive development.

People with disability in many countries in this region are often doubly excluded by poverty and social exclusion.

Australia considers that in supporting the Millennium Development Goals, it must pay greater attention to the needs of this group.

Through the implementation of our disability-inclusive development strategy, *Development for All*, Australia is helping to ensure that people with disability play an active and central role in development processes.

Madam President

We look forward to joining with you all tomorrow to adopt a forward plan of action from 2010 to 2014.

By signing up to the Cartagena Declaration and Action Plan, and implementing our own mine action strategy, Australia will be making its contribution to the international effort on mine action.

Thank you.