

Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World
Item 9(a) Assisting the Victims
Statement by Australia

Australia thanks the Co-Chairs Thailand and Belgium for their excellent efforts to advance victim assistance over the past year.

We strongly endorse the priority accorded to victim assistance by Colombia and Norway at this Review Conference and for considering this issue at the beginning of the meeting for the first time. And we pay tribute to those who participated in the stunning dance routine during last night's opening ceremony.

Australia thanks countries with responsibility for significant numbers of victims for sharing their experiences and achievements today. It is clear that support for victims requires a long-term commitment by national governments, aided by the wider international community.

Since 2005, almost \$25 million has been provided through the Australian aid program for victim assistance. This includes funds to a number of the 26 states parties with significant numbers of victims, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Iraq, as well as others, such as Laos and Vietnam.

In our experience, victim assistance programs have proven most effective when delivered through integrated community projects.

Australian-supported activities in Cambodia and Laos, for example, have improved the social and economic conditions of affected communities. This has been through an integrated approach of clearing mines and providing community infrastructure and basic services, combined with vocational and agricultural skills training for vulnerable groups, particularly victims, to support their livelihoods.

For the past three years, Australia has been delighted to fund the Victim Assistance Expert position in the ISU, Ms Sheree Bailey. Ms Bailey has done outstanding work in awareness-raising and policy development on this important issue.

Under the new \$100 million *Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program 2010-14*, recently announced by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Smith, Australia will continue strong support for victim assistance over the next five years.

We will prioritise activities which improve the quality of life for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, including their affected families and communities.

We will adopt a holistic and integrated approach to victim assistance, by funding activities which support the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, with an emphasis on improving livelihoods and well-being.

And we will seek to ensure that support is provided to victims regardless of age, sex or socioeconomic status and is guided by the principle of non-discrimination.

In support of the principle of national ownership, Australia will seek to enhance the capacity of affected countries to manage their own mine action programs, including victim assistance activities, thus contributing to the achievement of Actions 24, 25, 26, 27 and 30 of the Cartagena Action Plan (as revised this morning).

Priority in our assistance will also be accorded to initiatives that integrate services for victims and people with disability, into partner government development policies and programs, as well as health, education and socioeconomic services.

In 2008, the Australian Government announced a new disability-inclusive development strategy for the aid program, *Development for All*, to ensure people with disability play an active and central role in development.

Australia's future mine action assistance will seek active participation of people with disability and victims in our mine action programming, thus supporting Action 23 of the Cartagena Action Plan.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Mr Graham Edwards, Patron of the Australian Network to Ban Landmines and a member of Australia's delegation to this Summit, to say a few words. Mr Edwards is also a landmine survivor and former member of Australia's Federal Parliament.