

**Workshop on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance in the
context of Development, Human Rights and Humanitarian Initiatives
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY H E AMBASSADOR JOHN QUINN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE UN**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to today's workshop on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance, hosted by Australia, Chile, Iraq and Austria. Australia and Chile are the Coordinators on matters relating to Victim Assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Iraq and Austria are the CCM Coordinators on matters relating to Cooperation and Assistance. Our event today has been facilitated by the technical expertise of Handicap International. Let me express Australia's appreciation to all these parties who have made this workshop possible.

Let me also thank you all for making the effort to be a part of this workshop. Many of you have travelled great distances to be here. We are most grateful to you for coming to Geneva to share your expertise and experience with us. At last count, we have representatives here of: fourteen countries affected by cluster munitions, landmines or explosive remnants of war, ERW; eleven countries which provide cooperation and assistance to affected countries; and ten non-government organisations which work on mine action, disability issues and other issues related to victim assistance.

We also particularly welcome the participation today of two representatives who are survivors of explosive incidents, and the invaluable perspective they have to contribute - Mr Jesús Martínez, from El Salvador, and Ms Margaret Arach Orech, from Uganda, who due to travel complications has not been able to make it to Geneva today but who we are hoping to hear a video message from later in the morning.

So we have with us today representatives from across all geographic regions, levels of development and phases of the delivery of victim assistance. Our objective is to draw on this richness of experience to develop guidance for states on how to address the needs of victims of cluster munitions, landmines and explosive remnants of war, most effectively and sustainably.

Australia is very pleased to have provided the entirety of the funding to enable today's workshop to be held, including sponsorship of a number of the attendees.

This reflects the enduring support for victim assistance which is at the heart of Australia's global mine action program. We are committed to improving the quality of life for victims of cluster munition, landmine and ERW incidents, globally. Victim assistance comprises approximately 20 per cent of our global mine action funding. Consistent with this commitment, we have served as CCM Coordinator on Victim Assistance for 2015 and 2016. For the past two years, Australia has worked alongside firstly Mexico, and now Chile to contribute to raising awareness of the victim assistance framework provided by the CCM.

There is a strong human rights dimension to our deliberations at this workshop. You will see from the notebooks, pens and pamphlets on your desks that Australia is a candidate for the UN Human Rights Council for 2018-2020. An important element of our campaign is our consistently strong advocacy for disability inclusiveness, including the importance of ensuring non-discrimination and respect for the rights of cluster munition, landmine and ERW survivors. During this tenth anniversary year of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Australia is working with our partners to increase focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, including at the World Humanitarian Summit later this month where we are co-sponsoring a high-level event with Finland and Thailand on disability in humanitarian contexts.

Australia understands that to meet our treaty commitments to cluster munition, landmine and ERW victims, and indeed all people with disabilities, we need to do two things in parallel. Our development assistance needs to include specific programs for survivors, which are also accessible to other people with disabilities. Our development assistance also needs to include programs to ensure the needs of survivors as well as all other people with disabilities are addressed in national level policies and programs. We know this is critically important to ensuring the needs of victims will continue to be met in the long term, because victims needs endure long after cluster munition, landmine and ERW clearance is completed. This is the integrated approach to victim assistance.

For this reason, Australia's approach to victim assistance follows a twin-track approach: we aim to have both disability-specific programs which target victims of cluster munition, landmine and ERW incidents, and a mainstream approach, which enables all people with disabilities to participate in and benefit from all our aid investments across all sectors.

Australia's recognition of the importance of ensuring our development assistance meets the needs of survivors of cluster munitions, landmines and ERW, together with all people with disabilities, is comprehensively reflected in *Development for All 2015-2020*. This is our second disability-inclusive development strategy which aims to strengthen disability inclusion across our aid program, in order to improve the quality of life for *all* people with disabilities. Under this strategy, Australia will provide specific support for victims and survivors of cluster munitions, landmines and ERW to find pathways out of poverty and realise their potential through a range of concrete measures.

In addition to providing specific victim assistance funding, Australia provides other support of potential benefit to victims and survivors of cluster munition, landmine and ERW through its \$4 billion annual aid program. This includes our support to strengthen the capacity of national health and socio-economic development programs, which improve the quality of life for people with disabilities, including cluster munition, landmine and ERW survivors.

Because of our commitment to an integrated approach to victim assistance, we have decided to work with Chile, Austria and Iraq on an initiative to develop guidance for States on how to implement such an approach. Through the responses to the questionnaires we have circulated to all states participating in this workshop today and through the experiences you will share at this workshop, we hope to identify some common good practices and useful recommendations on how to implement an integrated approach effectively. These will be incorporated into a Guidance Note by States for States which we, Chile, Austria and Iraq intend to present at the 6th Meeting of States Parties to the CCM in Geneva in September 2016. This is a first for the CCM, and builds on work already done under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

We have undertaken this initiative as Coordinators under the CCM. However, it's critical to emphasise that we see the integrated approach as applicable across all the disarmament conventions under which States Parties make commitments on victim assistance. The needs of survivors and all people with disabilities must be met through both targeted programs and national level policies, regardless of the cause of disability. For this reason, we hope the Guidance from this workshop can ultimately be adopted ultimately across all of the CCM, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Protocol V of the Convention on Conventional Weapons of War.

With this objective in mind, we have States Parties to all three Conventions represented in the room today, as well as the Implementation Support Units from both the CCM and Mine Ban Convention, and a range of non-government organisations with an interest in this issue. We will consult with all who are represented here today to produce landmark Guidance that is truly cross-conventional and most importantly, addresses the needs of all victims.

To conclude, let me thank our fellow Coordinators, Chile, Iraq and Austria, for their extensive cooperation in the preparations for this workshop and the broader initiative to develop Guidance on the integrated approach to victim assistance. I also want to thank Sheila Mweemba, Director of the CCM Implementation Support Unit, and Susanne Rihs Aeby and Laetitia Roch of the GICHD for the many thankless hours of administrative support they have provided in the preparation of this workshop. But finally, I wish to express our most special thanks to Elke Hottentot of Handicap International, who with the assistance of her colleague Gaëtan de Beaupuis and our intern Maddy Friend, have provided many months of technical support to the development of this initiative, and who will facilitate our discussions.

Thank you all again for your participation today.