Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons  
Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War  

Cooperation and Assistance

Mademoiselle Co-ordinator

Australia takes this opportunity to thank you for your work in promoting understanding of our cooperation and assistance obligations under Protocol V.

Australia fully recognises the devastating impacts that explosive remnants of war (ERW) have on individuals and communities, including the constraints they impose on development, long after hostilities have ceased.

We view international cooperation and assistance to reduce the impact of ERW to be an important precursor to sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. Such assistance enables peace and security, and the provision of humanitarian relief.

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Australia’s assistance to reduce the impact of ERW, provided under the mine action strategy of the our aid program, has focussed on the most heavily affected countries in the Indo-Pacific region, while maintaining the flexibility to respond to emerging needs and priorities in other regions.

Australia has exceeded the financial commitment made under our 2010-2014 strategy, and has now provided over $120 million since 2010 to reduce the threat of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The majority of our financial contribution is allocated to priority clearance and risk education activities. We are also providing significant levels of support for victim assistance.

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In our region, Australia has continued to support and encourage work with Pacific Island States to address the impacts of explosive remnants from World War II.

When we last met at the 2013 Meeting of State Parties, Australia reported on the support we provided for two workshops in the Pacific region to assist Pacific island countries to develop and coordinate their responses to the challenges of unexploded ordnance.

Australia also reported specifically on assistance we are providing to remove unexploded ordnance, provide risk education and build capacity to address unexploded ordnance in the Pacific nation of Palau.
We are pleased to note that the Pacific region continues to make steady progress in addressing the impacts of explosive remnants of war.

Following the two regional Pacific workshops, some Pacific Island countries such as Kiribati, are now developing national policies to address their ERW challenges.

Australia’s support to Palau is funded through Cleared Ground Demining. In 2013 the 30,000th item of UXO was cleared. This was a sea mine that weighed approximately 42 kilograms.

As an active member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the key regional organisation, Australia will continue to consult on how it can best support the region to respond to the problem of ERW.

Australia will also continue to coordinate its efforts with other donors and to encourage more donors to become involved and cooperate in the Pacific region.

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Australia’s support through our aid program is complemented by clearance work undertaken by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) through OPERATION RENDER SAFE in the South West Pacific.

OPERATION RENDER SAFE is the ADF’s enduring commitment to the disposal of explosive ordnance and makes a substantial contribution to improving the lives of our Pacific neighbours.

OPERATION RENDER SAFE entails locating, identifying and then disposing of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) to help improve public safety, and meets Australia’s obligations and responsibilities in this area.

The aim of OPERATION RENDER SAFE is to contribute to the safety of local communities throughout the south west Pacific by reducing the threat of UXO, including bombs and grenades.

As part of OPERATION RENDER SAFE, the ADF also assists Pacific nations through Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) training initiatives to develop UXO awareness and their own independent EOD capabilities.

OPERATION RENDER SAFE activities are conducted following a request by the host government. OPERATION RENDER SAFE 2013 was conducted in the Solomon Islands in November-December 2013.

There were about 200 personnel from five nations participating, commanded by the ADF. Personnel from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force EOD team, New Zealand Defence Force, United States Navy and Royal Canadian Navy participated in the operation.

This Australian-led operation concluded in the Solomon Islands with the disposal of more than 12,000 items of unexploded World War II ordnance. The items were
“rendered safe”, generally by a controlled explosion, in location, or at Solomon Islands’ main EOD site near the nation’s capital Honiara. Ships and divers surveyed more than 25 square kilometres of seabed, including eight kilometres of beachfront near Honiara and numerous channels in the Russell Islands.

Items that were discovered by the task force ranged from 1000lb (500kg) bombs to individual hand and rifle grenades.

In late 2014, OPERATION RENDER SAFE will take place in Torokina, in the autonomous region of Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea, which will build on EOD work conducted in Torokina in 2010 by a United States State Department contractor.

As with OPERATION RENDER SAFE 2013, OPERATION RENDER SAFE 2014 will be a multinational mission.

Finally, Mademoiselle Co-ordinator

Australia wishes to report that through the Defence Cooperation Program with Solomon Islands we provide support and capacity building for the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force EOD team.

This includes infrastructure development of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force EOD facility at Hells Point, with EOD training provided by a United States-contracted organisation.

Australia looks forward to continuing to work with other governments, United Nations bodies, international mine action groups, civil society, local communities, individual survivors and people with disability, to meet our obligations under this Convention.

Mademoiselle Co-ordinator, I thank you.