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**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
PHNOM PENH**

7 May 1996

**MEDIA RELEASE**

The following is the text of a media release issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer, on 5 May 1996.

**LANDMINES**

I am disappointed that the just completed Review Conference of the Inhumane Weapons Convention (IWC) failed to support Australia's position calling for a global ban on the use, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.

The head of the Australian delegation made Australia's position clear when he told the conference that a total ban is the only "sane, humane response" to the enormity of the global humanitarian and economic crisis brought about by the misuse of landmines.

We are joined in this view by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Review Conference, both of whom reiterated their support for a total ban to the final meeting of the conference, and over thirty countries which, like Australia, are now committed to achieving a total ban.

It is important in these circumstances to look to the future. The IWC is the only international instrument capable of delivering a legally-binding global ban on landmines.

There were some positive - albeit limited - outcomes from this first ever review of the Convention, which were due in no small part to Australia's efforts and which were achieved in the face of stiff opposition from those countries which held out against a total ban. In particular, we have a forward-looking conference declaration and an enhanced review mechanism through which Australia will continue to pursue the goal of a total ban with urgency and vigour.

At the same time, we must take urgent practical steps to combat today's landmines crisis. That is why I am announcing today, in fulfilment of our election commitment, a demining program for Cambodia and Laos worth A\$12 million over three years.

The Australian assistance includes:

- A\$9 million over three years for the United Nations Development Program/Cambodia Mines Action Centre (UNDP/CMAC) project;
- A\$800,000 for Australian Defence Force technical assistance to CMAC, including three technical advisers and one communications expert;
- A\$1.2 million for Non-Government Organisations: UNICEF, World Vision and Red Cross for activities in mine clearance, training and support for land mine victims;
- A\$900,000 over three years to the UNDP Trust Fund for unexploded ordnance clearance in Laos; and

- Additional small activities in mine awareness training, particularly for school children.

This contribution will make Australia one of the major donors to UN-sponsored demining and bomb clearance efforts in the region. Without increasing the rate of clearance, it will take nearly 140 years to rid Cambodia of landmines and at least 20 years in the case of Laos.

I will therefore be urging other governments to join Australia and participate more generously in the practical work of demining.

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The head of the Australian delegation made Australia's position clear when he told participants that a total ban is the only "safe, humane response" to the thousands of innocent mine victims and survivors who suffer from the effects of landmines.

He was joined in this view by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Review Conference, both of whom reiterated their support for a total ban at the first meeting of the conference, and over thirty countries which, like Australia, are now committed to achieving a total ban.

It is important in these circumstances to look to the future. The OAC is the only international instrument capable of delivering a legally-binding, global ban on landmines.

There were some positive - albeit limited - outcomes from this that can be taken to the Convention, which were due in no small part to Australia's efforts and which were achieved in the face of stiff opposition from those countries which held out against a total ban. In particular, we have a forward-looking confidence declaration and an enhanced review mechanism through which Australia will continue to promote the goal of a total ban with urgency and vigour.

At the same time, we must take urgent practical steps to address the current landmine crisis. But it is not least essential for the safety and well-being of our citizens around the world, a long-term strategy for Cambodia and Laos with AusAID will be over three years.

The Australian Embassy's activities:

AusAID will also work with the United Nations Development Programme and the Mine Action Centre (UNDP/MAC) project.

AusAID will also provide technical assistance in VET and other training and other economic activities.

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