

**In February, I was optimistic that the Programme was on course financially to meet expectations for sponsorship support for this meeting. You will be as pleased, as I am relieved, to know that my optimism was not misplaced. The fact that over half of the delegates in this room are here with assistance from the Programme highlights, not for the first time, its appeal and success. But it also raises a serious concern about how, in the future, we meet and sustain the high expectations placed upon us. The Ottawa process has set an important norm, but what has effectively become the Sponsorship Programmes own norm, of an average of 70 supported delegates at each intersessional meeting and meeting of States Parties will be difficult to maintain as new demands on Donors resources emerge.**

**At the February meeting, the Programme managed a balanced, widespread attendance, at an average cost per participant of CHF 3,209 for 68 delegates from 54 countries and one guest speaker. Today, as our weeks work draws to a close, it looks as though the Programme will have supported up to 70 delegates and 3 guest speakers. This has again been made possible through the commitment and generous financial contributions of the Donor Group. Its membership has now expanded to include those that have made or are in the process of making a donation for the first time. The Group consists of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Australia.**

**As Kerry Brinkert, the ISU Manager, reminded us at last Decembers 'Without Reservation' symposium, the Ottawa process has modified old-style diplomacy, preferring a less formal, hands-on, business-like approach to tackle the important issues before us. The Sponsorship Programme reflects this.**

**Increasingly our meetings consolidate a professional approach. They are shorter in length, more business is transacted by e-mail, and we are focussing on maximising the opportunity for supported delegations. Of the 48 States Parties present in February, 36 actively contributed to the Standing Committees or side events. 12 States Parties provided updates on victim assistance, 17 on mine clearance, 15 on stockpile destruction. In addition, 5 of the 9 non- State Parties played an active role.**

Invitation letters to this meeting placed an emphasis on recipients letting us know what contribution, they could make to this weeks work. As we have seen, this has again provided much to consider. Sponsored delegate participation, not just their attendance, has been good and is moving in the right direction. Active, on-going, engagement taking care to avoid unnecessary repetition, is the key- for Donors and recipients alike. It not only ensures that we are getting the best we can out of the support the Programme has invested in you, but also contributes directly to the development of the Ottawa process and the life of the Convention.

The Donors Group is not exclusive. Without reservation, I will continue to lobby those of you who are in a position to do so, to make a financial contribution and join it. The costs for this meeting have been covered, but additional pledges and contributions are needed to sustain the Programme at the fifth meeting of States Parties in Bangkok and thereafter in the run-up to the Review Conference in Nairobi in November 2004. It is then, if not before, that thought will have to be given to the sustainability and desirability of the Programme in its current format. I am not of course suggesting that the Programme should be given up. But it will need to reinvent itself and reassess its goals if it is to meet the challenges ahead as successfully as those that have gone before. Resource mobilisation is not about to get easier.

For the immediate future, Canada has recently pledged another \$75,000 Canadian dollars. Denmark is giving a further contribution of approximately CHF 38,000. Australia in addition to its contribution to the ISU has just made good its pledge of A\$ 50,000 to the Sponsorship Programme. The United Kingdom has just signed a three year contract to provide funding of £25,000. As we heard in February, the Netherlands will make available a second tranche of over CHF100,000 in 2004. I know others who are willing and working with their Capitals to do something similar. I look forward to hearing from them.

You will also recall my request last time for some creative thinking that could supplement and enhance the level of sponsorship assistance outside the formal Sponsorship Programme. Such arrangements will help ease the pressure on our financial resources and, with the Fifth Meeting of States Parties in mind, could usefully have a regional focus and play an important role in emphasising the problem of anti-personnel landmines in South Asia. Encouragingly, a number of States Parties have said that they might be able to help in this way. I hope they can do so.

**We are also seeing the first signs that some States Parties are willing to adjust the level of support they have traditionally received from the Programme. It is not that the Donors Group are seeking to deny support where it is genuinely needed, but nor are we in the business of encouraging dependency, which in the long term can be counter-productive, even destructive. The way forward is surely to encourage those of you who have grown in the process, to review your call on the Programme and look to what you can do to return the favour by assisting the Programme in its support of others.**

**Catherine Borrero, as Programme Administrator and many others frequently achieve the Impossible, but we cannot of course satisfy everyone's demands all of the time and as always, a number of applications have had to be rejected. This is primarily because of their failure to meet the deadline for submission or because we, as Donors, need further reassurance that there is a serious commitment to coming on board or implementing the Convention.**

**This year the Donors Group have set earlier deadlines to ensure that practical considerations can be taken fully into account and any difficulties resolved well-ahead of the actual meeting. We will be doing so again for the meeting of States Parties in September. So my message is clear; 'book early', submit your application form as early as you can and, if you need a visa, get the process started. I congratulate Guinea Bissau who has already set the pace.**

**I know that all involved with the Sponsorship Programme remain committed to the high standards it has set. We will continue to do all we can, subject to budgetary constraints, to provide assistance where it is genuinely needed to ensure attendance at these meetings. But once here, the onus is on you to make the process your own; to engage and show, without reservation, your commitment to it and prove beyond doubt that our efforts and the Programmes investment in your delegation are not in vain but the stimulus for an interaction increasing in quality.**

**In closing may I thank all, the Centres administration, Donors and delegates alike, who make the work of the Programme a success.**