

Commonwealth of Australia

Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

I. Population Policies: Advancing Access to Sanitation

Every year lack of access to clean water and sanitation kills children at an equivalent rate of a jumbo jet crashing every four hours. Globally, 780 million people, roughly one in nine, lack access to an improved water source. Of these, more than 3.4 million, an amount equal to the entire city of Los Angeles, die annually from lack of water and clean sanitation. The UN has adopted numerous resolutions to address the global sanitation and clean water crisis, including the Mar del Plata Action Plan which affirms that, “[a]ll peoples, whatever their stage of development and their social and economic conditions, have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs” and A/RES/54/175 reaffirming that, “all individuals have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation”. Australia strongly supports these actions, however we deplore that despite global progress, the issue remains unresolved.

The Commonwealth of Australia has long been a supporter of achieving United Nations Millennium Development Goals, including the MDG 7, topic 10 objective to “[h]alve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.” Australia, under the guidance of Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop, recently refocused our current foreign aid package objectives in accordance with these goals. Australia helps to provide access to safe water, basic sanitation and improved hygiene practices across the Asia-Pacific region and Africa. Australia works with partner governments to assist them in implementing their national WSH strategies. For example, in Indonesia we support the Water Hibah program which provides payments to local governments after they have established new water and sewerage connections to low-income households. Australia also supports Vietnam’s Rural Water Supply and Sanitation National Target Program and Timor-Leste’s Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (known as BESIK). Australia works with civil society organizations (CSOs) with strong on-the-ground expertise to deliver a range of WSH activities. Through the Civil Society WSH Fund Australia is supporting thirteen CSOs to deliver innovative WSH programs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific to 2018. Australia is also working with multilateral partners including the World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Program, UNICEF and the World Health Organization to support global policy and advocacy on WSH and to strengthen institutions to assist countries to deliver effective and sustainable WSH services.

The Committee directive guides us to generate documents that will allow Member States categorized as DC and LDC to implement WSH practices that are affordable and sustainable. With this in mind, Australia proposes that we adopt for widespread implementation the proven programs currently producing sustainable results in limited venues. Many of these are economically self-sustaining needing only minimal aid funds for startup and implementation. Community development programs successfully being employed by Caritas Australia include simple but strategic processes: drilling boreholes and supporting communities to install water pumps; developing other alternative safe water sources, such as ring wells and deep tube wells, rainwater harvesting tanks and sand filter systems; building covered toilets, pot racks and sanitation facilities, such as simple Tippy Taps for hygienic hand washing; and providing education on improved hygiene practices.

Australia proposes a workshop approach, funding for which is possible through UNDP Global Environmental Funds Small Grant Programmes, including “Train the Trainer” leader development intensives. Community-based approaches have in the past two decades proven extremely successful in ensuring project outcome sustainability by incorporating the involvement of local governance authorities and actors and the participation of beneficiaries in the management of water resources. These strategies have also proven successful for Wells for India. They have established specific, successful guidelines for ensuring long term project sustainability. This can only happen when villagers have the knowledge, skills and motivation to maintain the project’s achievements – whether physical structures, social structures, or new ways of doing things. Workshops would cover listening to the villagers about their needs, and securing their ‘buy-in’ to the project. Also, how to support villagers to form and run village development committees enabling them to manage natural resources responsibly; to plan collectively for their community’s future; and to access additional resources, such as local government funding, to support future development. Trainers would learn how to provide technical expertise to projects to ensure the quality of the design and build of physical structures and train villagers to develop skills such as farming and masonry. Finally, completed projects should be independently evaluated to ensure they have achieved the planned impacts. Only by expanding on these proven and successful initiatives can we achieve sustainability on a global level.

II. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration into Civil Society of Ex-Combatants

Developing nations face a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and poverty. There is an alarming relapse rate of 40% among developing countries coming out of conflict. Each conflict is unique, thus Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives are unable to fully rely on precedents or past proposals. Each situation has to be addressed individually and proper time must be taken to develop a plan that will prevent recidivism into violence. It is imperative that the global community work to establish a secure environment so that recovery and long-term peacebuilding strategies can be implemented. We must build on the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) established by the UN Interagency Working Group on DDR (IAWG-DDR) and develop them to meet the needs of countries recovering from military upheaval. The importance of DDR programs can scarcely be overstated. As UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon states in the UN publication *Peace Operations: A Retrospective*, “[t]he process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration was at the heart of peacekeeping efforts, not only in bringing stability to conflict areas, but in addressing their root causes”.

As a strong supporter of S/RES/2170, Australia recognizes that, as stated by Senator Stott Despoja, Leader of the Australian Democrats, “[o]ne of the factors that we must address in confronting terrorism is the poverty that fosters fundamentalism and hatred.”. Indeed, eight out of ten of the world's poorest countries are suffering, or have recently suffered, from large scale violent conflict and no country suffering from prolonged violence has achieved a single one of the millennium development goals.

Australia has a long history of working with UN peace building projects, having been involved continually from the first UN peacekeeping mission. Australia’s commitment to DDR programs is evidenced by our contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Budget, of which our nation is the 12th largest contributor. This funding has been used to great effect in conflict-stricken regions, including Cote d Ivoire, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Successful micro-projects in these regions have created economic opportunities, such as new farms and factories, for ex-combatants. In the Indo-Pacific region, Australia has committed to support the ongoing peace process by expending more than \$6.52 million towards mine removal actions, food aid, rehabilitation and conflict reduction, with nearly \$350,000 specifically for the rehabilitation of Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka. An additional amount of up to \$1.3 million will also be provided through bilateral programs for community based peace building initiatives. Such programs are of tantamount importance in pursuing the MDGs, including goal one, target 1B, and goal two, target 2A.

Australia believes that the time has come to develop and implement Second Generation DDR initiatives. By expanding DDR programs to include families of combatants and civilians displaced by conflict, entire societal infrastructures can be strengthened. Job training programs provide not only employment skills for former combatants, but skilled workers for a rebounding economy. Child soldiers given an opportunity to complete their education and acquire life and job skills can become contributing members of their new communities. Without these long term goals, it will be difficult to overcome traumas and trained behaviors of their former military life.

As such, with the importance of long term stability and peace in mind, Australia has developed a series of recommendations designed to stem the continued tragedy of violence and poverty. Australia calls upon developed countries to reaffirm their commitment to A/RES/2626 to provide 0.7% of GNP as Official Development Assistance. Recognizing the important contributions of women in the process of conflict recovery, Australia urges the international community to build on the success of S/RES/1325, affirming the specific needs of female perspective in the repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Lasting peace can never be achieved when women are excluded from the peacebuilding process and marginalized by social institutions. Therefore, Australia advocates for an expansion of DDR micro-projects, binding increases in funding to the inclusion of women in the peace building process. Examples of such successful micro-projects include a sustainable pig farm in the Cote d Ivoire, implemented by seven FAFN ex-combatants the program received only approximately \$5,500 and within six months grew to seven times its initial investment. Such requirements in new and continuing DDR programs would transform women from victims into empowered leaders in post conflict societies.

Identifying the unique role that African nations have played in the development of DDR programs, while also conceding the need to better such efforts, Australia calls for a conference of African nations under the aegis of the African Union to pinpoint successful elements of DDR and areas for improvement. In so doing, the UN and member states will gain an invaluable retrospective look at DDR policies by those most affected by them and how to better target our DDR spending to achieve greater results. Past summits, including the Millennium Summit, which led to the creation of the UNMDGs, have proven to be of great importance to course of international relations and the direction of foreign assistance.