

AGENDA ITEM: VICTIM ASSISTANCE



Statement on Victim Assistance Intersessional Meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty 8 June 2017

Thank you Mr Chair.

Lately, much of the discussion has aimed to advance the understanding of an integrated approach to victim assistance, and to improve reporting. Reporting is a valuable tool for action and a resource for assessment and planning.

States Parties recognize that in order to fulfil obligations to victims, assistance should be integrated into the broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks of affected states, while the efforts of donor states should enhance broader development and humanitarian frameworks and should provide targeted assistance. Guidance documents on this integrated approach and on reporting were released last year. The Landmine Monitor has also published examples of successful integration of victim assistance activities into broader frameworks. There are many examples of good practices, and now those need to be exercised more widely.

States need to report on these efforts and how they contribute to the full and effective participation of mine victims in their societies. We are half-way to the next Review Conference: states should be ready to report on having achieved 50% of their plans.

Supporting the full inclusion of survivors requires that essential activities be included in governmental strategies and frameworks. But it also means that existing activities carried out by civil society that are yet to be included in planning and policies must be funded and maintained.

Yet, information we receive from our member organizations indicates that while coordination mechanisms are often in place, laws take a long time to change, policies lack specificities, and strategies are adopted but are often not fulfilled. International assistance programs come to an end and NGO projects close, leaving gaps in services. ICBL members work with governments to help address these gaps in the majority of states with significant numbers of victims. But civil society often only has enough resources to provide the most essential of the services, if that.

Clearly, states need to recognise the essential work done by civil society in areas of victim assistance such as health, mental health and psychosocial support, physical rehabilitation, education and economic inclusion.

Networks of survivors, organizations representing victims and organizations of persons with disabilities often provide indispensable services and support that are not formally recognized in national plans, policies and frameworks -- for example, peer support and referrals to services. But are States Parties doing their "utmost" to enhance the capacity of victims' representative organisations?

Of late, victim assistance earmarked funds provided by donor states as part of humanitarian mine action budgets have declined, despite recent increases in the number of casualties and survivors worldwide.

We also see that overall, the availability of resources has become precarious. But, even when resources are scarce, let us not fail to assist where possible. It costs nothing to raise the issue of victim assistance in the work of international, regional and national bodies such as those tackling human rights, development, or emergency response. In fact, this is a commitment under the Maputo Action Plan.

For example, among the needs that can be raised in fora outside this mine action community, all States Parties should call for support for the integration of survivor-led services into sector such as health, social welfare and education. In doing so, they will acknowledge the expertise that victims have developed as service users, providers and advocates, and they will contribute to sustainability.

States in a position to provide international assistance should mobilize development assistance from sectors other than mine action. International support and donor contributions in areas such as healthcare, disability rights, education, livelihoods and economic development should also be directed to improving the quality of life of survivors and indirect victims. In doing so, states could report on how they are contributing to victim assistance at a much needed and greater scale than currently available.

Thank you.