

## Statement by Belgium on Victim Assistance

### APMBC Intersessional Meetings

22/05/2019

Mister President,

Belgium aligns itself with the statements delivered by the **European Union** and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

- Belgium would like to **thank all members** of the “Committee on Victim Assistance” for their engagement in the work of the Committee this year. We look forward to pursuing our good work during the second half of this year and to ending our four years of commitment to the Committee on Victim Assistance with a solid contribution for the review conference.
- We would also like to **thank the ISU, as well as the ICBL and the ICRC** who are observers on the Committee, for their valued support to the committee’s work.
- My country also expresses its **deep appreciation to the States Parties that have submitted updated information** on their progress in implementing their victim assistance commitments under the Convention. Belgium urges all States Parties that haven’t yet done so to submit their art. 7 **reports** as soon as possible, and to include in those reports relevant information on their victim assistance commitments and the challenges they may face. With 24 out of 29 States Parties having submitted information on victim assistance efforts in 2018, we are getting closer to fulfilling our **objective of reporting cover rate**. Reports by States Parties on art. 7 are also getting more detailed and increasingly include disaggregated data.
- Belgium remains strongly **committed** to the Ottawa Convention, both politically and financially, as these commitments go hand in hand in our view. As a member of the Committee, our aim is to advance victim assistance and to raise awareness on the importance of addressing the needs and guaranteeing the rights of mine victims as well as their full, equal and effective participation in society.
- The significant rise in the number of mine victims over the last years –including by improvised mines-demonstrates, with increasing urgency, the need to step up our national and international efforts for the well-being of mine victims and their communities.
- As a donor State, Belgium **integrates victim assistance**, as a **specific approach**, into the policy planning and financial support we deliver to demining projects.
- In order to establish the conditions for the delivery of victim assistance, the Committee continues to focus on **building synergies with human rights**, disability and other relevant actors. We welcome, in

this regard, the Committee's address to the CRPD and the WHO this year. This year, the Committee has also been able to address a session of the Human Rights Council for the first time.

- The Committee continues to strengthen its cooperation, through retreats and expert meetings, with the victim assistance coordinators of the CCM and Protocol V of the CCW, and with the Committees on Cooperation and Assistance of both the CCM and APMBC with a view to better promote the needs and rights of mine victims.
- My country continues to **plead for the inclusion**, and the full, equal, and effective participation, of mine victims. The integration of victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks is key in assuring victim's inclusion. In the affected countries, mine action is key to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is incumbent upon mine affected countries to connect the Sustainable Developments Goals and their development strategies with mine action and to make it a cross-cutting issue. In this respect, we would like to thank Mozambique, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance, for making the SDGs a priority of the work of the Committee this year.
- **Gender mainstreaming** is gaining importance as an horizontal priority in mine action, as reflected by the priorities set by the Presidency of the Review Conference. We welcome the establishment of the informal Gender and Mine Action Working Group, created at the request of the Government of Norway as civil society lead preparatory forum, and encourage participation at the Gender and Humanitarian Mine Action side event that will take place today from 1 to 3 pm.
- **Access to assistance and rehabilitation services** remain an important challenge for many affected States, particularly in remoted areas. This could be a particular point of attention for the following plan of action of the Ottawa Convention.
- Another challenge concerns the **devastating effects of victim-activated IEDs** also known as improvised mines. Those devices represent a particular challenge for rehabilitation and they obstruct the access to many areas. In order to improve our response and strengthen resilience, information on incidents with improvised mines should be gathered and processed in a systematic manner.

Finally, Mister President,

- Belgium calls for **victim assistance to remain at the heart** of the Convention as a **core engagement** of all State Parties.