

As the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance, we would like to start our intervention by reminding State Parties that the number of mine survivors is not decreasing, contrary to what was mentioned by some mine-affected countries this week. Although the number of accidents may be decreasing in some countries, the overall number of survivors increases with every new accident, therefore increasing number of persons who are entitled to assistance under article 6.3 of the Mine Ban Treaty.

On another matter, a large number of the countries that presented a statement on victim assistance last Tuesday have already signed the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. We warmly welcome this initiative as a step towards the recognition of victim assistance as a human rights issue and towards its more effective implementation.

We also take this opportunity to urge all countries that have not done so to sign and ratify this Convention. We particularly urge the 13 victim assistance priority countries that have not joined the Convention to do so before the next meeting of State Parties.

Indeed, although many States already have disability legislation, it is often based on charity or on a medical approach. The UN Convention reflects a paradigm shift- it is an opportunity to diminish disabling barriers and to create an inclusive society that promotes, protects, respects and fulfills the rights of all persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors.

The UN Convention provides a framework to remind States that victim assistance is a human rights issue which requires long-term planning and the development of sustainable disability strategies. We encourage countries to ensure that economic policies include a disability perspective; and that these policies are met with adequate budget commitments and expenditures.

We would like to remind mine-affected countries that States have the obligation for progressive realization, which means that for those areas that have resources implications, all State Parties have the obligation to demonstrate they are conducting initial steps, on a non-discriminatory basis, from the moment they join the Convention. Donor countries also need to ensure that their development aid programming is disability inclusive.



Finally, we would like to thank those donor countries which have made the VA expert sponsorship possible. The VA parallel expert programme has been an enriching contribution to this meeting, and we urge continued support of such initiatives.

We look forward to hearing more from you on how you are working to implementing the Mine Ban Treaty and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities at the next meeting of State Parties.

Thank you.