

Norwegian introduction on victim assistance. Geneva, April 23-27<sup>th</sup>.

I am happy to take the floor on this important issue. Victim assistance is a crucial part of the Mine Ban Treaty. Norway will continue to participate in discussions around issues regarding victim assistance, both as a State Party who is deeply committed to our obligations to assist and cooperate with affected countries, and in the capacity of Coordinator for the Contact Group for Resource Mobilization. Norway will continue supporting the survivors and their societies, in close cooperation with the survivors and their organisations, as well as governments.

The obligation to assist landmine survivors and people with disabilities rests with the state. It is therefore important to develop mine affected countries own capacity to meet the needs of landmine survivors and affected communities. State parties and NGOs must actively support affected states in their efforts to strengthen and build up national structures and enhance national and local capacity and competence - to respond to the needs and rights of all citizens, including landmine survivors.

Norway would like to underline the importance of including gender in all aspects of mine action, also in mine survivor assistance. Both men and women are landmine survivors. There is an increasing awareness of the multifaceted challenge women bear as survivors, mothers, wives or relatives of those killed or injured by mines. At the same time, women often represent the local capacity on for example basic health supplies, in education and general awareness work. We are convinced that a gender sensitive approach in mine survivor assistance will enhance its' effectiveness and efficiency.

The Mine Ban Treaty has obligations on Victim Assistance, but these are now complemented by a new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Over 85 states have signed since it was opened for signature on 30<sup>th</sup> March this year. Norway finds this very encouraging. We welcome the adoption of this new convention and hope that it will empower the 650 million persons with disabilities in the world. The goal is to create a better future with respect to their enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

We see this new convention, the continued interest for the Mine Ban Treaty and the Cluster Munitions process as interrelated, and as signs of encouraging environment for keeping these issues high on the international agenda.