

## SURVIVOR CORPS

Thank you Mr. President.

Mr. President, as you mentioned this morning, the States Parties to the MBT concluded in 2004 that victim assistance is more than just a medical or rehabilitation issue – it is also a human rights issue. Since the Nairobi Conference in 2004, where the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was first mentioned, the understanding of the importance of disability rights for ensuring inclusion and participation of mine survivors in society has increased tremendously.

Leadership and meaningful participation of survivors and people with disabilities in the processes that created the CRPD, just like they did in the Mine Ban Treaty, ensured that the first human rights treaty of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is also the most comprehensive human rights treaty ever. Survivor Corps, as one of the leading organizations working to bring survivor voices to these processes, was privileged to see survivor participation and leadership helped translate the victim assistance standards under the Mine Ban Treaty into a legal obligation in the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

We have heard from the representatives of those countries this morning that the systems and mechanisms put in place by the states in an effort to implement the CRPD both complement and enhance their efforts at ensuring the rights of mine survivors. We call on those states parties that have not ratified the CRPD, especially those from among the VA 26, to speedily ratify and begin implementing the CRPD.

Mr. President, the challenges for the future of victim assistance will be many. Some of the greatest challenges, which are also key factors for success will be ensuring sustainability and national ownership of victim assistance efforts. The CRPD framework helps achieve these goals. It ensures that victim assistance is firmly embedded into permanent legal frameworks and mechanisms that promote human rights of all persons with disabilities.

States presentations this morning show that there has been progress on the ground in terms of the understanding of the human rights-based approach to victim assistance and disability rights. We applaud those countries that have shown how they are advancing this understanding and call on all states to show how these efforts achieve concrete positive change in the lives of survivors.

Many of the VA 26 have reported that they have or are in the progress of developing laws and policies to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors. We applaud them as well.

However, mere adoption of laws is not enough. These laws must be in line with the CRPD. Otherwise, they can endanger the progress and reinforce the outdated medical and charity approaches to disability that the CRPD rejects. Let me highlight a few examples of what these laws should provide in order to further the human rights-based approach to disability:

**General** - If your country has a **law protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities**:

- The law must **ensure equality** to persons with disabilities
- Very importantly, it must include **sanctions** for non-compliance and **remedies** for rights violated.

**Accessibility**: A law on **accessibility** must address **reaching public places and maneuvering within, using public transportation**, but also **accessing services, and receiving information**

- It must refer to **obligatory accessibility standards**, that are concrete and **translate accessibility into numbers and technical requirements** (instead of vague guidelines such as “make it easy for persons with disabilities to enter”)
- It must also include an **obligatory timeframe** for achieving full accessibility (instead of open-ended aims)

**Employment:** ✓ - The law on employment must first and foremost **prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability**, and ensure employers have an obligation to make **reasonable accommodations** in the workplace.

- It should provide economic **incentives** for employers to employ persons with disabilities, such as **state contribution to the cost of making the workplace accessible**.
- It should provide for **opportunities for vocational training, assistance in finding employment, self employment**.

If the laws that states parties adopt do not provide for such measures, they can, and indeed will, stagnate the progress on victim assistance implementation.

Mr. President, in conclusion, Survivor Corps joins the call of our colleagues from the ICBL and urge our Colombian hosts, as well as the organizers of the Second Review Conference to ensure that Cartagena city is fully accessible.

This will not only facilitate survivor participation in the Conference but will increase awareness of the international community about the importance of accessibility to enjoyment of rights by landmine survivors. More importantly, the Colombian government will thereby facilitate the inclusion and participation of Cartagena's citizens with disabilities.

Thank you Mr. President.