



European Union
Statement by

**Mr Andras Kos, Minister Counsellor,
Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

APMBC - 13th Meeting of the States Parties

(Geneva, 2-5 December 2013)

Victim Assistance

Geneva, 3 December 2013

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

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EU Statement on Victim Assistance

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Turkey^{*}, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[†], Montenegro[†], Iceland[‡], Serbia[†], Albania[†], Bosnia and Herzegovina[†], Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

Mr. President,

Victim Assistance is a core component of the European Union Mine Action Strategy and we are committed to strengthening care, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of victims caused either by anti-personnel mines or any kind of explosive ordnance.

In this regard, we wish to highlight the important linkage between the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which represents a strong and comprehensive framework to address the needs of survivors, realization of their human rights and ensuring respect for their dignity. We therefore believe that in order for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable, they need to be integrated into broader disability policies. For the European Union, it is crucial to address the long-term challenges of victim assistance and ensure that funds invested are actually achieving the desired ends, taking also into consideration the continued relevance and complementarity of other international instruments and norms. Our ultimate promise to victims is and remains to ensure their full participation in all spheres of one's society on an equal basis with others. This goal cannot be achieved by the Ottawa Convention alone. While States need to completely fulfil their commitments on victim assistance under the Ottawa Convention, we therefore also need to take advantage of possible synergies with other instruments to achieve full accessibility of all services with the participation and empowerment of all survivors in a sustainable way.

We welcome the work undertaken by the Co-Chairs on Victim Assistance, Austria and Colombia, to strengthen the assistance to victims under the Convention. We commend the Co-Chairs for the focus they have laid on the devastating impact of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war on children that also contribute significantly to child disability. We support the work undertaken in this particular area.

* Candidate country

† The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

‡ Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

Mr. President,

The EU, under its Council Decision of November 2012, provides resources to the Implementation Support Unit to support up to three States Parties in taking stock of the fulfilment of their victim assistance commitments under the Cartagena Action Plan. Priority is placed on States Parties that have established a national disability plan or are well on the way to doing so and therefore would have some implementation history to assess. Let me mention two concrete examples in this regard.

A national workshop on victim assistance was held in Lima, Peru in April 2013 attended by stakeholders from various levels of government in Peru, as well as from non-governmental and international organizations. The aim was to ensure that Peru's process to revise its national plan is inclusive and participatory. The Council Decision enabled representatives from each region of the country to attend the workshop. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had stressed that more needed to be done to involve persons with disabilities in matters that concern them in Peru. One particularly positive outcome of the workshop was therefore the identification by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of such matters where it could provide follow-up support to Peru, concretely as concerns work and employment conditions. Since the national workshop, the UNOHCHR has been working with the ISU and Peru to share best practices on work and employment issues. Peru has requested follow up support from the ISU as it prepares to release its final draft of their national action plan.

A national symposium on victim assistance took place on 13-14 November 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It brought together all stakeholders including governmental experts from the national and regional levels as well as disabled persons' organizations and landmine survivor advocates. Of particular importance was the participation of Ethiopia's Bureaus of Labour and Social Affairs which are the key implementers of the national disability plan. The symposium highlighted that awareness of the national action plan was low and ensured that relevant national stakeholders gained enhanced understanding about specific aspects of the plan. The workshop produced a number of conclusions and action points that will guide Ethiopia's future efforts to enhance implementation of its national disability plan.

The EU Council Decision also provides resources to the ISU to support the staging of a global conference on assistance to the victims of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The aim is to build upon the experience of assisting victims in the context of the Convention in order to take advantage of potential benefits with regard to the implementation of other international instruments that deal with the same subject matter and affected States. Colombia will host an event entitled "Bridges between Worlds" in April 2014 in Medellin. This conference will seek to deepen our understandings between and find synergies among the human rights, disability, international humanitarian law and victim assistance worlds.

On top of these activities and in addition to the individual contributions of EU Member States, the EU has also committed significant funds to victim assistance in 2012 through its other financial instruments to many countries and regions of the world, including India, Niger, Somalia and Sri Lanka.

Thank you, Mr President.