



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
14th Meeting of State Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Statement on Victim Assistance
Geneva, 2 December 2015

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva Office, UNMAS

Mr. President,

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA)¹, comprising United Nations entities involved in mine action.

Victim assistance is a crucial pillar of mine action. The United Nations views this session as a way to help identify what needs to be done to further bring critical support and attention to victims and ensure that their human rights and needs are met.

The United Nations continues to welcome the profile given to the issue of victim assistance in its fora as well. This is clearly reflected in the text of the resolution on Assistance in Mine Action adopted without a vote by the General Assembly's Fourth Committee on 16 October.

This resolution urges States to provide humanitarian assistance for victims of mines and other explosive remnants of war, and to take measures to spare the civilian population that are consistent with the principles of international humanitarian law. It also encourages States to support access by victims to appropriate medical care, physical and sensory rehabilitation, psychosocial support, education and skills training and income-earning opportunities and to provide those services to all, regardless of gender, age or socioeconomic status.

The resolution also encourages States, and relevant organizations involved in mine action, to continue efforts to ensure mine action programmes take into account the specific needs of victims and to provide capacity-building assistance to affected countries in order to integrate victim assistance into broader national frameworks.

The United Nations takes very seriously the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on assistance in mine action, which is consistent with the relevant provisions in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and actively supports programming in support of victims from mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards.

For example, UNDP focuses its activities on victim surveys to identify the nature and extent of the needs for specialized services in countries such as Angola, Cambodia, Colombia

¹ The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) (Chair), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer), and the World Bank (Observer).



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and Mozambique. In other countries, notably in Albania, Azerbaijan and Yemen, UNDP has given support to the establishment of orthopaedic and rehabilitation centres managed by Handicap International, the ICRC, or local NGOs. Linked to the broader livelihood programmes, UNDP supports economic reintegration through production centres and vocational training for mine victims in Albania, Azerbaijan, Lebanon and in Yemen. One notable exception to UNDP's limited role has been in Tajikistan, where it has been pivotal in the national effort to provide services to landmine victims.

In Myanmar, UNICEF supports emergency assistance to mine victims and their families in coordination with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society. Under the leadership of the government, a national technical sub-group has been established to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy on socio-economic reintegration of survivors and their families.

In Afghanistan, UNMAS has just launched a USAID-funded Victim Assistance project to mitigate the impacts of conflict on civilians. The three-year programme will provide immediate assistance, and support long-term service needs. This targets Afghans who have suffered loss or injury resulting from ongoing insurgency or remnants of conflict, including incidents resulting from unexploded mines, munitions and other hazards. UNMAS activities will include emergency and immediate care for victims of conflict, mobile orthopaedic workshops, psychosocial support and economic reintegration.

Additionally, in Darfur (Sudan), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, South Sudan and the Territory of Western Sahara, UNMAS provides assistance to victims of mines and explosive remnants of war through Victim Assistance programming. These programmes include physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, vocational training, as well as training national authorities on delivering and monitoring such services directly.

Mr. President, to conclude:

Please note that the United Nations is leading the process of updating its victim assistance policy of 2003. Since then, the normative framework for addressing victim assistance has significantly changed. This update is being conducted in response to the commitment made by the IACG-MA in the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. It aims to ensure greater coherence, effectiveness and impact of the work of the United Nations in support of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). The updated Policy has now reached its final stages of endorsement at the Principals level of the IACG-MA.

Thank you.