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Statements of the Kingdom of Belgium
on the thematic matters in agenda item 11.

Check against delivery.

(victim assistance)

My country reaffirms its political commitment to the objectives of the Convention and supports mine clearance, mine risk education, advocacy and of course victim assistance projects.

The last two years, in 2016 and 2017, Belgium disbursed **more than 3.300000 €** to international cooperation and assistance projects related to mine actions and other unexploded ordnance. Belgium also contributed to global projects of Handicap International and to the ICRC appeals.

As member of the Committee on Victim Assistance, Belgium considers that victim assistance must remain at the heart of the efforts of all the States Parties to the Convention, and will remain, more than ever, **central in its future**.

Victim assistance, as a specific approach, taking also into account the gender perspective, is **integrated into the policy planning and financial support of my country** as it is in the new EU decision in support of the Maputo Action Plan

We must build on the achievements of previous Presidencies. We know the key actions of our road map as designed in the Maputo Actions Plan.

We would like to stress again the importance **to address the needs** of mine victims in a comprehensive manner to achieve their **full, equal and effective participation in the society**.

Today it is very important **to act together**, to make the victims (direct, indirect and their communities) **actors of their own development** and to further implement a **victim integrated assistance** in the broader policy framework of our Convention and of other relevant conventions but also in the context of the human rights and the sustainable development goals (**SDGs**).

Bridges are progressively built between policies providing assistance to victims of landmines with policies providing assistance to people disabled through other causes. In this way we will **"be stronger together"**, as the Chair of the Victim Assistance Committee put it.

New tools as the **individualized approach** are welcomed to increase funding for victim assistance based on the needs expressed by the States Parties connecting each affected country with the donor community or inside regional cooperation.

Awareness raising of our public opinion is also important. In this respect, together with Handicap International, my country organized in Brussels from 29th of September till 19th of October an **exhibition** of photographic testimonials entitled "*For a world without mines. Belgium and Handicap International : 20 years of action*".

Belgium wishes to warmly thank the Colombian Presidency for its committed and inspiring leadership of the Victim Assistance Committee. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the Presidency and our fellow Committee members, we can report this year a **notable increase in the number – and quality - of the art. 7 reports** submitted by affected States. We have also strengthened our **cooperation with important partners** such as human rights and disability actors, victim assistance coordinators of the CCM and Protocol V of the CCW, and the Committee on Cooperation and Assistance of the Ottawa Convention with a view to better promote the needs and rights of mine victims. No doubt these efforts will be pursued next year.

We would also like to thank Colombia and Thailand for providing Arabic, French and Spanish translations of the **Guidance on victim assistance reporting**. Reporting is not an easy obligation and some States encounter difficulties in submitting their national reports. This type of initiative is thus essential to facilitate reporting by States Parties, enhance the quantity and the quality of reporting, and so help States fulfill this important obligation.