

**Statement on Victim Assistance
Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
19 December 2017**



Thank you.

The Mine Ban Treaty (or Ottawa Convention) put victim assistance on the map by making it international law! We acknowledge the contribution made by our host, Austria, to make sure it would stay on the map, and grow through the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It was here in Vienna in 1995 that survivors first spoke at the United Nations in front of many states. They presented the human face of the suffering caused by the horrible weapons they wanted to ban. They personified the strength, courage and determination to get on with their own lives and to make sure that life for others would not be threatened by landmines.

At every international meeting since then, survivors have been present, raising their voices to state their needs and advocate for their rights. In some countries, the voices of survivors influence policy making. In some other countries, there is still a long way to go before survivors feel they are listened to, and their contribution is taken into account. But one thing is sure: survivor networks have grown up in many parts of the world, working at grassroots level. We urge that they are supported and not all funds go to the big international organisations simply because it is easier for finance departments to deal with big grants. Effective action for the most remote and most vulnerable people should be one of the key criteria in allocating funds.

Even today, twenty years after the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty, mine victims are not able to exercise the same rights as others, and often face multiple forms of discrimination. Especially survivors in vulnerable situations, including girls, boys and women.

Persons who have newly survived a mine incident need rapid and full emergency medical care. We must have access to the most functional and appropriate prosthetic limbs available, as the effectiveness of our social and economic inclusion depends on it.

Mine victims are marginalized by difficulty in accessing the labor market, and other areas of social life, such as education, culture, and sports. States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty need to do more to develop support programs for mine survivors, affected families and other persons with disabilities, especially when it comes to inclusive education and economic empowerment -- I mean livelihoods and income generation, small businesses and regular employment. This must include transforming employer prejudice against persons with disabilities.

States Parties, not only NGOs, need to increase the number of programs available, and to find resources for initiatives such as peer support, recreational, sports, cultural, artistic and religious programs. These provide survivors with opportunities to access services, demonstrate their skills, and help one another realize their rights. This was a key point noted by colleagues from around the Asia region who met in Cambodia this month to reflect on the past two decades of the mine ban.

Adequate and timely support is largely dependent on the accuracy of data, so practical collection of data on victims' lives and needs remains one of the major ongoing challenges for each country. Databases exist in most countries, but they are often incomplete, outdated, isolated from other data collection mechanisms, and remain to be distributed to service providers. One solution is to authorize access for mine victims' own organizations to update them.

Plans and laws that link the CRPD and the Mine Ban Treaty have made already huge difference. We were happy to see Afghanistan revising its disability legislation where it was discriminatory. Yet, let us not forget about indirect victims. In Afghanistan, Burundi, Croatia, Senegal, Uganda, and Yemen, victim assistance plans have expired and need renewal. It is necessary to include mine victims and their representative organizations in these processes, in a meaningful manner.

The Mine Ban Treaty has introduced ground-breaking changes to our lives by enabling channels of cooperation and solidarity between states and civil society, survivors and service providers. But there remains notable gaps in meeting the obligations to mine victims. If we increase the pace of the last twenty years, adequate and sustainable victim assistance can be in place by 2025. This is achievable.

Thank you.