



**Panel Discussion**

**“Keeping People at the Heart of the Convention: Effective Victim Assistance”**

**Tuesday 19 December 2017, 10:00 – 11:00**

**Concept Note**

**Background**

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was adopted with the aim of “putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines that kill or maim hundreds of people, mostly innocent civilians and especially children, obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement”. The Convention set a precedent by incorporating legal obligations to assist victims and survivors into an international instrument governing conventional weapons. The victim assistance provision was the result of the hard work of advocates to push for its inclusion in the final text of the Convention.

Subsequently States Parties, with the support of survivors and a wide range of non-governmental and international organisations, developed a rich set of understandings and methods to bring the promise of the Convention to life. These understandings encompass national ownership, equality, non-discrimination, full inclusion and participation, an integrated and comprehensive approach, a gender and diversity perspective, data collection, transparency, efficiency, accountability, accessibility and sustainability. It has also been understood that efforts to assist the victims should be integrated into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to disability, health, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, human rights, development and poverty reduction. These understandings and practices were embodied in the action plans of *Nairobi*, *Cartagena and Maputo* and eventually also were taken up in subsequent arms control and disarmament conventions.

Today, there is consistency amongst the different disarmament treaties as concerning assisting victim and survivors regardless of the weapon that resulted in injury and disability. Added to this body of international humanitarian law that concerns itself with “victim assistance” is relevant human rights law. In particular the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability has helped redefine the concept of victim assistance as a human rights issue.

While progress has been made by States Parties in understanding and implementing victim assistance, a wealth of challenges remains to be addressed. It is clear that to overcome many of these challenges and ensure the sustainability of “victim assistance” efforts, a continued comprehensive approach to matters concerning support to persons with disability, including

landmine survivors, in affected communities will be necessary including close collaboration with human rights, disability, and development partners.

### **Focus and objectives**

The panel will look at progress achieved and explore the manner in which we as States Parties can move forward to ensure that the challenges faced by victims of mines are best addressed.

The panel discussion will look at:

- Why the Convention came to incorporate victim assistance into the text of the Convention and early efforts to implement the victim assistance provisions of the Convention;
- What are the understanding and principles in the implementation of the victim assistance provisions of the Convention and challenges that remain in its implementation;
- Effective ways to integrate victim assistance into broader contexts, including national policies, and plans and legal frameworks relating to issues such as disability, health, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, human rights, gender, development and poverty reduction.

### **Speakers and panellists**

Opening: **H.R.H. Princess Astrid** of Belgium, Special Envoy to the Convention

Facilitator: **H.E. Beatriz Londoño Soto**, Ambassador of Colombia to the United Nations in Geneva and Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance

Panel:

- Catalina Devandas Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Mr.
- Kenneth R. Rutherford, Director, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery
- Elke Hottentot, Handicap International, Victim Assistance Technical Advisor
- Firoz Alizada, Campaigns and Communications Manager, International Campaign to Ban Landmines–Cluster Munition Coalition

### **Format**

The panel will be held in an interactive format, with no presentation other than the opening address, which will lay the ground for discussion and define the scope of the theme. The facilitator will begin the discussions by asking a different question to each panellist. Each panellist will have the opportunity to offer any insight into the matter. This will be followed by comments and questions from States Parties and other participants.

States Parties are encouraged to participate, refraining from providing formal statements.