



European Union

**Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
17th Meeting of States Parties
Geneva, 26-30 November 2018**

EU Statement on Victim Assistance

Madam President,

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

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania* and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

As this is the first time I take the floor, allow me to welcome the Presidency of Afghanistan and wish you every success for MSP17. Let me also welcome Norway's candidacy to chair the Review Conference next year.

We thank the Committee on Victim Assistance, chaired by Belgium, for their presentation and welcome their conclusions. In particular, we would like to thank the Committee for actively seeking to reinforce cooperation and increase synergies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant health, human rights and disability actors and instruments. We also thank the Committee for its increased attention to gender and the Sustainable Development Goals this year. The EU also welcomes the new Operational Guidance to make Victim Assistance more responsive to gender and diversity concerns, as prepared by the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) with Italian support in the framework of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We reaffirm that in order for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable in the long run, they need to be integrated into broader disability policies. We would

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

like to recognise the important role that civil society plays in the effective implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, including in the area of victim assistance.

Madam President,

A considerable number of people are killed and maimed by anti-personnel mines. Those injured often require life-long care, have their rights impaired, become socially excluded, suffer psychological harm and find themselves at an economic disadvantage. In responding to the needs of mine victims we have come a long way. There is a shared understanding of the importance of integrating victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction. However, several countries with significant numbers of victims lack adequate resources and require continued support to strengthen their response and meet their commitments under the Convention. On top of this, according to the Landmine Monitor, an exceptionally high number of people were recorded as killed or injured by landmines and explosive remnants of war in 2017. This only emphasises the need to step up our efforts on integrated victim assistance in the period leading to 2025 and beyond.

For the EU, victim assistance is a core component of our mine action assistance. The EU Council Decision that was adopted in August 2017 in support of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention provides assistance to up to five States Parties to implement the victim assistance relevant aspects of the Maputo Action Plan that call for integrated victim assistance. The project is supporting the setting up of National Stakeholder dialogues on victim assistance, involving national and international stakeholders and especially those who are injured by mines and indirect victims such as family members. The dialogues incorporate gender and diversity aspects of victim assistance at the design, management and implementation levels. The Committee on Victim Assistance is involved in the selection of beneficiary partners. The first two Stakeholder dialogues on victim assistance have already taken place in Baghdad and Kampala. We would like to congratulate the Iraqi and Ugandan authorities on the successful holding of these events and thank the ISU for its support. The outcomes were presented at a side-event on Monday.

In the context of this same EU project and in view of the upcoming Review Conference, the ISU will organise an international conference on victim assistance in 2019, as a follow-up to the EU-sponsored global conference that took place in Colombia in 2014 with the title "Building

Bridges". The conference will aim to integrate victim assistance into broader disability and development policies at national level. In this respect, we look forward to further discussion at the two-day "Victim Assistance Experts Meeting" that will be launched by the Committee tomorrow and the opportunity it represents for affected States to share their valuable input.

Finally, we welcome the increase in the reporting rate observed this year and we urge all States Parties to fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations ahead of the 2019 Review Conference.

Thank you, Madam President