



European Union

EU Statement on Victim Assistance 19th Meeting of State Parties Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention The Hague, 16 November 2021

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland align themselves with this statement.

We would like to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance for their work, in particular for actively seeking to reinforce cooperation and increase synergies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant human rights and disability actors and instruments.

Victim assistance is an integral aspect of mine action and aims to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW). Therefore, we should not forget that victim assistance is

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

applicable not only to the victims of landmines, but also to addressing the rights and needs of victims of other ERW.

While mine clearance programmes have a definite end, victim assistance is an on-going process that requires sustained long-term engagement. EU mine action is therefore a long-term commitment. We work with assistance organizations and national authorities in affected countries to use available resources effectively and to contribute to integrating victim assistance into broader disability and development policies at the national level. From this perspective, the EU is actively supporting the efforts of States Parties to implement their victim assistance programmes.

The EU especially welcomes the work conducted this year by the Victim Assistance Committee on Action 40 of the Oslo Action Plan, devoted to safety and protection of mine survivors in situations of risk and emergencies, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder to all of the importance of doing more to ensure the safety and protection of the most vulnerable groups in situations of risk and emergency.

30 States Parties, amongst which some are the poorest on earth, have indicated that they have significant numbers of anti-personnel mine victims in need of assistance. These countries are facing significant challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities. Priority needs must be defined, and assistance must be provided for the sake of humanity and dignity.

Over the past years, the European Union has been supporting national stakeholder dialogues in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Senegal, South Sudan and Uganda so that all parties responsible for the wellbeing of mine-affected communities and survivors can better address the challenges they face through

strengthened dialogue and partnerships. We will continue to support these States as they revise or develop inclusive national action plans.

In the framework of the implementation of the ongoing Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/257 and with the input of the Committee on Victim Assistance, the new Council Decision will extend its support to States via national and/or regional stakeholder dialogues in the Americas, Europe, Central or Southeast Asia, the Middle East-North Africa, Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan regions. Those dialogues will seek to support States Parties in strengthening their multi-sectoral efforts in ensuring that the victim assistance implementation is in line with relevant CRPD provisions. In that framework, the EU welcomes the upcoming national stakeholder dialogue on assistance to mine victims and disability rights that will take place soon in Sudan and Guinea Bissau.

By adopting the Oslo Action Plan, (OAP) States Parties re-affirmed their commitment to *‘ensuring the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society, based on respect for human rights, gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination’*. The EU would support a third global conference, with experienced victim assistance practitioners, the UN Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility and a Member of the Committee of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to review OAP implementation and contribute towards a new Action Plan to be adopted by the international community in 2024.

Thank you, Mr. Chair