

## Activities and Priorities for Implementation 2022-2023

### Committee on Victim Assistance Algeria (Chair), Ecuador, Italy and Uganda

#### I. Activities of the Committee

1. On 9 December 2021, the Committee held its first meeting to revisit its mandate and to discuss its 2022 work plan according to its priorities presented at the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties (19MSP). In preparation for 2022 activities, the Committee reviewed information on the status of implementation of Victim Assistance (VA), in relation to progress in achieving the objectives of relevant actions of the Oslo Action Plan (OAP), and the challenges expressed by the States Parties with VA responsibilities.
2. On 14 January 2022, the Committee held a planning meeting to discuss activities, priorities and the calendar for the first quarter of 2022.
3. On 19 January 2022, the Committee hosted the 2022 VA retreat with participation of VA and Cooperation and Assistance Coordinators of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), VA Coordinator of Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (the "Convention"), the Implementation Support Unit of the CCM, the Secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities/the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), representative of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and Humanity & Inclusion. The VA retreat is an annual meeting of Geneva based victim assistance and disability rights stakeholders, organised by the Committee on Victim Assistance to further harmonize implementation of VA efforts. The retreat provided an opportunity to share activities and priorities for 2022 as well as to exchange other relevant information. Participants encouraged such efforts to continue in recognition of the importance of promoting a common understandings and cohesive approach to VA and its integration into broader frameworks.
4. On 25-27 January 2022, support was provided to Guinea-Bissau in hosting a National Stakeholder Dialogue on Victim Assistance and Disability: *"Leaving No One Behind"*. The Dialogue was hosted by the National Mine Action Centre (CAAMI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Cohesion and the Ministry of Public Health of Guinea-Bissau. The Dialogue held with the financial support of the European Union (EU) through the EU Council Decision (2017/1428), and with technical assistance of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Convention, in collaboration with the Committee. The Dialogue focused on integration of VA into a recently developed five-year National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities that was pending adoption. The Strategy was shared with participants to provide input and recommen-

dations for its effective implementation. In line with its theme of “*Leaving No One Behind*”, the Dialogue was attended by representatives of ministries, representative organisations of mine victims, persons with disabilities including from rural and remote areas, civil society organisations and other national and international stakeholders.

5. On 17 February 2022, the Committee hosted a side event, entitled “*Victim Assistance: The Importance of Inclusion in Broader Frameworks Including in Situations of Risks, Crises and Humanitarian Emergencies*” on the margins of the Global Disability Summit 2022 (GDS). The side event provided an opportunity for the disability rights community and other participants of the GDS to learn more about the work of the Convention and to exchange information on efforts to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including explosive ordnance survivors in situations of risk, including, situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. The Committee was joined on the panel by VA and disability rights experts presenters from Humanity & Inclusion, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Afghan Landmine Survivors Organisation, Office of the UN Secretary General Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility and UNICEF. Over 70 persons attended in the virtual side event. International sign language as well as Spanish and English simultaneous interpretation were provided to increase access to the event.
6. On 24 March 2022, the Committee met to discuss its annual theme. Following in-depth discussion within the Committee, including with Committee Observers (i.e. International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and ICRC) and other partners, the Committee decided to focus its efforts on the issue of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation was also viewed as an area where the Committee would have a positive impact by highlighting its importance to mine victims and drawing attention to challenges in providing rehabilitation in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. The Committee also decided to host a panel on rehabilitation at the 2022 Intersessional Meetings and a VA Experts Meeting on the margins of the Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties (20MSP) in November 2022.
7. On 7 March 2022, the Committee delivered a statement at the opening of the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee). The Chair provided an update on the work of the Committee and highlighted the importance of integrating VA into the CRPD implementation frameworks in accordance with Action #34 of the OAP. The Chair commended the CRPD Committee for their work on drawing attention to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, and stressed the need for increased efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities and mine victims. The Committee also encouraged the CPRD Committee to consider the inclusion of questions in the list of issues regarding the situation of mine survivors and their inclusion and participation in the CRPD frameworks for all States with VA responsibilities.
8. On 14 March 2022, the Committee delivered a statement at the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of Human Rights Council during their annual debate on the rights of persons with disabilities. In his statement on behalf of the Committee, the Chair focused on the fact that increased

casualties due to mines and other explosive ordinances, protracted conflicts, poverty and various forms of humanitarian and health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic have been exacerbating mental health challenges in mine affected and developing countries. In this respect, the Committee welcomed the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights report on the need to harmonise national legal frameworks concerning mental health. In line with Action #38 of the OAP, the Chair stated that psychological and psychosocial support are among the key elements of VA and are considered a foundation for the successful socioeconomic reintegration of mine survivors. The Committee also welcomed the report and recommendations presented by the UN Special Rapporteur on Persons with Disabilities to ensure the artificial intelligence is inclusive of the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

9. During March, April and May 2022, the Committee along with the other Convention's Committees and the Presidency held bilateral meetings with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe. The purpose of the bilaterals was to exchange information on implementation of the OAP, to encourage reporting on VA and to offer assistance in accordance with the mandate of the Committee.
10. On 26 May 2022, the Committee submitted a written statement to the World Health Assembly concerning assistive technology. The Committee welcomed the first Global Report on Assistive Technology by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF and supported the recommendations and messages included in section 5 of the report on "preparing for assistive technology in humanitarian crisis" in section. The Committee shared information on its VA efforts and encouraged increased efforts by the international community in ensuring that assistive technology is made available in an affordable and accessible fashion in all situations, including in times of humanitarian crisis.
11. In May and June 2022, the Committee analysed VA information submitted by the States Parties to develop preliminary observations on the implementation of their VA commitments.
12. On 21 June 2022, at the Intersessional Meetings, the Committee on Victim Assistance and the Committee on Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance co-hosted a thematic discussion on "Fostering Cooperation for Rehabilitation<sup>1</sup>" aimed at exploring lessons learned and challenges in the delivery of rehabilitation services and cooperation and assistance opportunities in support of these efforts. A number of experts shared insights and suggested recommendations concerning accessibility, affordability and quality of assistive devices in support of mine survivors and persons with disabilities in affected communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Thematic panel on rehabilitation: <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/en/intersessional-meetings/2022-im/>

13. Following the expert panel on rehabilitation, on 21 June 2022, the Committee held an informal conversation with VA Experts and other participants involved in VA to exchange on Committee's theme, "rehabilitation" and to seek inputs on further efforts to be made to shed light on the importance of rehabilitation, and challenges faced in making adequate, accessible, affordable and quality rehabilitation available to mine victims and persons with disabilities. The Committee also informed the VA Experts about the VA Experts Meeting 2022 and a global conference on VA to be held in 2023 and invited the participants to share their suggestions and recommendations in this regard.
14. During July 2022, the Committee circulated the preliminary observations on the Implementation of VA to respective States Parties to seek further information or clarification.
15. On 15 August 2022, the Committee delivered a statement at the opening of the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva with a focus on employment, and de-institutionalization, including in emergencies and highlighted the fact that employment is a central part of the socio-economic inclusion pillar of VA. The Committee provided an update on VA developments and challenges and extended its invitation to the CRPD Committee Members to participate in the VA Experts Meeting in 2022 and in the Global Conference on Victim Assistance in 2023. The Committee reiterated its message on application of Article 11 of the CRPD and Action #40 of the OAP as well as the need to join efforts given the impact of conflict on persons with disabilities in Ukraine, Yemen and other places.
16. During September 2022, the Committee began preparations for the 2022 VA Experts Meeting to provide an opportunity to VA experts and other VA stakeholders attending the 20MSP to share best practices and discuss developments and suggestions concerning rehabilitation.
17. In the run up to the 20MSP, the Committee worked to analyse and prepare conclusions and recommendations on information submitted by 28 States Parties with mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control on their efforts to achieve the VA objectives of the OAP.

## **II. Priorities for implementation**

1. The Committee will continue prioritising regular and improved reporting by States Parties with mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control by 30 April of each year, and will encourage in particular those that have not submitted Article 7 Report and/or have not provided information on VA implementation efforts in 2022 - Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Serbia, Somalia and Uganda – to submit reports as soon as possible. The Committee will continue supporting States Parties in strengthening the quality of reports including by encouraging the employment of the Guide to Reporting and the VA Checklist.

2. The Committee will continue to raise awareness about the importance of continued efforts to strengthen the integration of VA commitments into broader frameworks such as disability, human rights, health, education, development, poverty reduction, humanitarian response and other relevant frameworks such as the CRPD.
3. As 2022 marks midterm implementation of the OAP and in accordance with its analyses of progress and shortcomings in implementing the VA commitments under the OAP, the Committee has identified the following actions that may require particular attention:
  - a. establishing or strengthening a centralised database with disaggregated information made available to relevant actors (Action #35);
  - b. ensuring the availability of a national referral mechanism, including by creating and disseminating a comprehensive directory of services (Action #37);
  - c. ensuring access to comprehensive rehabilitation services and psychological and psychosocial support services, including the provision of assistive devices, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and peer-to-peer support programs (Action #38); and,
  - d. carrying out efforts to ensure the social and economic inclusion of mine victims (Action #39)
4. The Committee will assist and encourage the States Parties with ongoing casualties in their efforts to enhance the provision of emergency medical care and to strengthen measures that protect the safety of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities in situations of emergency.
5. The Committee will continue supporting national dialogues to strengthen implementation support for VA, including by making use of the European Union Council Decision in support of the implementation of the VA related aspects of the OAP.
6. The Committee will continue to support greater attention to the consideration of gender and diversity in VA activities. The Committee will continue to encourage States Parties to report how their implementation efforts ensure that the different needs, situations and perspectives of affected women, girls, boys and men are considered.