

## Victim Assistance

### Intersessional meeting of the MBT – June 20 -22<sup>nd</sup> 2022

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Thank you, Mr. President,

Again, 2020 saw far too many lives taken, and dreams shattered, by landmines and explosive remnants of war incidents. Since 2015, this is the sixth year in a row that we witness rising numbers of casualties globally due to increased conflict and contamination. While Ukraine already had the responsibility for casualties before the war, the number of people killed and injured has sharply been increasing due to the use of landmines and other explosive weapons. The situation has shown once again the necessity to provide effective and efficient first aid to casualties as well as other medical emergency services and ongoing medical care, as stressed by action 36 of the OAP. In just a few months, access to basic goods and services such as healthcare has been drastically hindered and reduced, in particular for those most at risk of exclusion, including persons with disabilities, direct and indirect victims.

While the ICBL is urging states to make more and better efforts in achieving a Mine Free world, we are also compelled to remind you once again that there are **at least 34 States Parties with the responsibility for significant numbers of mine victims! Let us remind you here that mine-free does not equate victim-free. Victim assistance is multi-sectoral efforts that span a life time.**

Two years and half have passed since States Parties adopted the Oslo Action Plan. In the meantime, and on a positive note, the International Mine Action Standard 13.10 on Victim Assistance in Mine Action was endorsed in October 2021 to provide further guidance on how the mine action sector can contribute to facilitate access to services for people injured by explosive ordnance, survivors and indirect victims.

Since 2019, however, only minor progress has been made globally in ensuring victims access services. Much, much more needs to be done to realize the actions and related indicators on VA contained in the Oslo Action Plan; this is all the more pressing as the need for services, from health, to education, work and employment has only increased due to the COVID crisis.

Indeed, 2020 even saw some regression in the provision of rehabilitation services and assistive technology to meet the needs of persons with disabilities including mine survivors. We are pleased that the VA committee has decided this year to focus on rehabilitation and Action 38 of the OAP to address the related challenges including accessibility, coordination of services and supply of materials.

Of these 34 States Parties with a significant number of victims, in 2020, as reported by the Landmine Monitor, at least 22 had 'active' coordination mechanisms to integrate VA into broader policies, plans and legal frameworks at the national level. While survivors' representatives participated in coordinating processes in two-thirds of those States Parties, there was little evidence that their input was considered or acted upon. According to Action 41 of the Oslo Action Plan, States must do better, and give ownership to victims and their representative organizations in all matters that affect them, including in rural and remote areas.

According to the Landmine Monitor, only 14 of the 34 States Parties had VA or relevant disability plans in place to address recognized needs and gaps in assistance, while 11 others have yet to complete work in this regard. Victims cannot wait, states must rapidly work to close the gaps in service delivery and facilitate victims' access.

In line with Actions 35 of the OAP, States Parties need to continue to strengthen their centralised database with information on people killed, as well as people injured and their needs and challenges. Action 37 of the OAP requires the development of a national referral mechanism to facilitate access to services for victims. Accessing needed services makes all the difference in survivors' quality of life, as it is this that facilitates their ability to work, go to school and participate in the lives of their communities. Access to services is key for survivors to regain their place in society.

According to the Landmine Monitor, in 2020 we witnessed a 23% decline of the direct international contributions for VA activities compared to the 2019 level – support to VA representing only 6% of the global mine action funding. **As such, we must stress: VA funding – as part of donor states mine action envelop but not only - should not decrease, ever, but especially not now, when needs are higher than ever.**

In addition, the ICBL calls on the 16 States Parties with responsibility for landmines victims that have not yet submitted their Article 7 report, to do so and to make the most of the VA reporting, in order to better communicate their needs and report on progress in implementing the OAP commitments<sup>1</sup>.

**Finally, we call the mine action sector as a whole, whether those working in affected states or those in states in a position to provide international cooperation and assistance to implement the recently adopted IMAS 13.10 on VA in Mine action to ensure that mine action interventions, particularly land release and risk education contribute to facilitate people injured by mines/EO, as well as survivors and indirect victims' access to services.**

All those that have been directly and indirectly impacted by the inhumane impact of these weapons have every right to access comprehensive services. Let's all make sure this happens.

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<sup>1</sup> List of countries that submitted their Article 7 report as of June 13th 2022 : Albania, Algeria, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, Croatia, DRC, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Nicaragua, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen, Zimbabwe.