



European Union

Twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Geneva, 20-24 November 2023

Statement on Victim Assistance

Mr. President,

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

The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova¹ align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me thank you, Ambassador Goebel, for your able chairmanship of this Meeting. We trust we can achieve concrete deliverables in protecting and integrating mine victims in national and global policies under your presidency.

The European Union would also like to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance members for your work, as well as Cambodia for hosting the Third Global Conference on Assistance to Victims of Anti-Personnel Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance, which took place in Phnom-Penh in October 2023.

The Cambodia Conference has gathered more than 200 States and organisations, including landmine survivors, with the support of the European Union. The conference has been a great opportunity to raise awareness about the needs for greater inclusion of mine survivors, notably persons with disabilities, and to create equal opportunities to all. It addressed the important topic of mental health and psychological support as part of wider disability rights and development approaches. It set tone as well as our level of ambition in view of today's discussion.

Mr. President,

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The European Union has been resolutely engaged in favour of mine victims and persons with disabilities through its policies and assistance, in particular in the implementation of the Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/257 which provides for national stakeholder dialogues to encourage parties responsible for the wellbeing of mine-affected communities and survivors to better address the challenges they face through strengthened dialogue and partnerships. 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 provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In this context, the EU welcomes the ISU efforts in the frame of victim assistance. The EU joined the States Parties that have contributed to the Sponsorship Programme and to the work of the ISU by further supporting the Victim Assistance Experts Meeting including by sponsoring participation of mine survivors and campaigners. The project also sponsored a Dialogue in Zimbabwe to promote support for Zimbabwe's ambition to achieve its 2025 mine clearance goal. Furthermore, the EU supported Sudan in hosting a national dialogue to finalise inputs for its National Strategic Framework on Victim Assistance, which was in the making for nearly two years. Finally, the EU contributed to the Third Global Conference on Victim Assistance and the Rights of Mine Survivors in Cambodia. We will continue to support these States as they revise or develop inclusive national action plans.

As long as anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature and explosive remnants of war continue to affect the lives of millions of civilians across the world, the European Union will continue to engage.

The European Union recognizes the social, economic and developmental impact of those weapons, and will continue to work through mine clearance, victim assistance, international cooperation and assistance, and universalization efforts among others to achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines. We are fully committed to a victim-free world and we will provide sustained and continuous assistance to victims in order to fulfil their rights.

The European Union also supports full, equal, effective, and non-discriminatory participation of mine victims in society as a key component of victim assistance, based on respect for human rights, gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in line with relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In this regard, mainstreaming a gender perspective into its mine action work and supporting the work of stakeholders in mine action to integrate a gender perspective by taking diverse

needs and experiences of people in affected communities into their humanitarian mine action policies remains a top priority for the EU.

In conclusion, Mr. President, this Conference can count on the EU continuous support and engagement to strengthen cooperation, assistance, and the mobilisation of resources in order to achieve the goal of an anti-personnel mine-free world.

Thank you Mr. President