

Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

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Item 10 (a) of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention**Assisting the victims: Conclusions and recommendations related to
the mandate of the Committee on Victim Assistance**

Activities and Priorities for Implementation 2023-2024

Committee on Victim Assistance

(Italy, Slovenia, Uganda (Chair) and Zambia)

I. Activities of the Committee

1. On 12 January 2023, the Committee held its first meeting, to revisit the mandate of the Committee and to discuss its 2023 work plan, according to its priorities presented at the Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties (20MSP). In preparation for 2023 activities, the Committee reviewed information on the status of implementation of victim assistance, in framework of the Oslo Action Plan (OAP), and challenges reported by the States Parties with victim assistance responsibilities.

2. On 14 February 2023, the Committee met to discuss and decide on a theme for the Committee's work in 2023, "Mental Health and Psychological Support" (MHPSS) to draw attention to the needs of mine victims and the challenges and shortcomings encountered in this regard. The Committee chose MHPSS to build on progress made in promoting rehabilitation in 2022, as MHPSS is considered an integral part of broader healthcare and rehabilitation. In addition, the Committee discussed the calendar of VA activities and events and preparations for the 2023 VA Retreat.

3. On 7 March 2023, the Committee met with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) to exchange information on victim assistance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in line with its mandate to engage the disability rights community and to raise awareness among them regarding the provision of Victim Assistance. The Committee welcomed the CRPD Committee's decision to develop a 'General Comment'¹ on Article 11 of the CRPD and provided suggestions and recommendations on integration of victim assistance and related matters in the drafting and development of the General Comment.

4. On 13 March 2023, the Committee delivered a statement during the annual debate on the rights of persons with disabilities at the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council

¹ The CRPD Committee provides authoritative guidance about the provisions of the CRPD by elaborating and demystifying certain provisions through comprehensive 'General Comment' which serves as a reference document and helps States Parties to fulfil their obligations. The Article #11 of the CRPD mirrors Action #40 of the Oslo Action Plan, which aims to ensure the safety and protection of persons with disabilities and mine survivors in situations of risks and emergencies. The Committee on Victim assistance had encouraged the CRPD Committee to adopt a General Comment on Article #11, to strengthen the synergies between victim assistance and the CRPD and overall disability rights.



(HRC).. The Committee welcomed recommendations presented by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on the need to redesign and transform the modality, design and delivery of services provided to persons with disabilities. The Committee highlighted the significance of participation and inclusion and appreciated the HRC's efforts in this regard. In addition, the Committee shared information on its activities, and invited stakeholders to a victim assistance Global Conference, which will be hosted by Cambodia, with the support of the European Union in October 2023.

5. On 14 March 2023, the Committee hosted the 2023 victim assistance retreat with the participation of Victim Assistance and Cooperation and Assistance Coordinators of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), the Victim Assistance 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 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), the 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 retreat, which is an annual meeting of Geneva-based victim assistance and disability rights stakeholders, provided an opportunity for the different organisations to share their activities and priorities for 2023 as well as exchange other relevant information.

6. On 15-16 March 2023, support was provided to Sudan in hosting a National Stakeholder Dialogue: "A Strategic Approach to Respond to the Needs of Mine Survivors and Other Persons with Disabilities in Sudan". The Dialogue was hosted by the National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) in collaboration with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and national ministries and other stakeholders in Khartoum. The Dialogue was held with the financial support of the European Union and with technical assistance of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Convention, in collaboration with the Committee. The Dialogue focused on finalising the National Strategic Framework for Victim Assistance, by providing a platform for various stakeholders including 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.

7. During the months of March, April and May, the Committee along with other Committees of the Convention held bilateral with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mauritania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Zimbabwe. The purpose of the bilaterals was to exchange information on implementation of the OAP, to encourage reporting on victim assistance and to offer assistance, in accordance with the mandate of the Committee.

8. On 29 May 2023, the Committee delivered a statement at the World Health Assembly under the agenda item concerning "the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities". The Committee welcomed the first global report on health equity for persons with disabilities by the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported recommendations included in the report and encouraged integration of victim assistance into broader healthcare. The Committee also highlighted the need to increase efforts and cooperation for rehabilitation and assistive technology and called upon WHO to enhance its support to the affected States Parties to address shortcomings in rehabilitation and assistive technology. The Committee drew attention on challenges affecting States Parties in providing MHPSS and called on WHO's disability and mental health departments and other stakeholders to assist the States Parties with victim assistance obligations to address this challenge, including by integrating the psychosocial and psychological needs of mine victims into broader mental health policies and programmes. Moreover, the Committee on Victim Assistance invited all the States that have not joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention to do so as soon as possible.

9. On 30-31 May 2023, Uganda, as the Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance participated in the "African Regional Seminar on Mine Action: a safe and mine free Africa" organised and hosted by the Government of Algeria in Algiers. The Chair highlighted the need to increase efforts to achieve the victim assistance objectives of the Convention in the region, including through enhancing regional and south south cooperation.

10. During the month of May 2023, the Committee analysed victim assistance information submitted by the States Parties through their Article 7 transparency reports – Albania, Algeria, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Yemen and Zimbabwe - and developed preliminary observations on the implementation of their victim assistance commitments.

11. On 20 May 2023, the Committee sent a letter to share preliminary observations with the respective States Parties to invite further information and clarifications on information they have submitted on victim assistance.

12. On 19 June 2023, at the Intersessional Meetings, the Committee presented its activities since the 20MSP and preliminary observations on the implementation by States Parties of their victim assistance commitments under OAP’s Actions 33 to 41. On 20 June 2023, the Committee hosted a panel discussion on “Victim Assistance and the Oslo Action Plan: Are we on track in providing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)?” to examine what we have learned in the past years concerning the importance of MHPSS and approaches to the delivery of this critical element of Victim Assistance and how far the States Parties have come to meet mental health and psychosocial needs of mine victims since the adoption of the OAP.

13. On 17-19 October 2023, the Chair of the Committee participated in the Third Global Conference on Victim Assistance and Disability Rights², hosted by the Government of Cambodia and financed by the European Union.

14. The Committee carried out efforts to prepare for the Twenty-First Meeting of the States Parties and to host the 2023 Victim Assistance Experts Meeting.

II. Priorities for implementation

15. 2024 is an important year for the States Parties as it will coincide with the final year of the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. The Committee will work on improved reporting by all States Parties³ with mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control by 30 April 2024, and will encourage in particular those that have not submitted Article 7 Report and/or have not provided information on victim assistance implementation efforts in 2023 - Afghanistan, Burundi, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Niger, Mauritania, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan and Ukraine – 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 Victim Assistance Checklist.

16. As per its understandings and analyses of progress and shortcomings in implementing the victim assistance commitments under the OAP, the Committee will work with the States Parties to require increased attention on the following areas which are identified as underreported:

- (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,

² <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/en/resources/eu-project/third-va-global-conf/>

³ Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Palestine (State of), Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe

- (d) Enhancing the inclusion and participation of mine survivors and their representative organizations (Action #41).

17. To ensure the next Action Plan of the Convention will be tailored to the needs of the States Parties with mine victims, the Committee will provide opportunities to Victim Assistance Experts of the States Parties and other relevant organisations, practitioners and representatives of mine survivors to share their inputs and recommendations for consideration in the next Action Plan.

18. The Committee will continue raising awareness about the importance of continued efforts to strengthen the integration of victim assistance commitments into broader frameworks such as disability, human rights, health, education, development, poverty reduction, humanitarian response and other relevant frameworks such as the CRPD.

19. The Committee will continue supporting national dialogues to strengthen implementation support for victim assistance, including by making use of the European Union Council Decision in support of the implementation of the victim assistance related aspects of the OAP.

20. The Committee will continue to support greater attention to the consideration of gender and diversity in victim assistance activities. The Committee will continue to encourage States Parties to report more how their implementation efforts ensure that the different needs, situations and perspectives of affected women, girls, boys and men are considered.

21. The Committee will continue to raise awareness on challenges faced, including due to constraints in availability of resources, in relevant international forums.
