



**European Union**  
**Intersessional Meeting**  
**Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**  
**Geneva, 19-21 June 2023**

**Statement on Victim Assistance**

Mr. Chair,

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

The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, we would like to congratulate Germany for the successful chairing of the Eighth Pledging Conference of the Convention, which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March in Geneva. The pledges declared by the States Parties during the Conference will significantly contribute to mine action, including the work of the Implementation Support Unit, which is critical to the functioning of the Convention.

It is of utmost importance that we continue our collective efforts in order to meet the obligations under the Convention; to achieve the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, the clearance of mine-contaminated land, provide mine risk education and assistance to mine victims and strengthen sustainable national capacities. The intersessional meeting represents a key platform to share information on progress made and maintain the momentum towards the full implementation of the Oslo Action Plan.

Mr. Chair,

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. We are grateful for including rehabilitation as a key component of victim assistance in the programme of this year's intersessional meeting. We realize that there are States Parties to the Convention that continue to face challenges in delivering rehabilitation services to the victims of landmines.

While mine clearance programmes have a definitive conclusion, victim assistance is an ongoing process that requires sustained long-term engagement as well as national ownership. EU mine

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<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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 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.

30 States Parties, some of which are the least developed countries on earth, have significant numbers of anti-personnel mine victims in need of assistance. These countries are facing-complex challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities. Priority needs must be defined, and assistance must be provided for the sake of humanity and dignity. In line with Action 38 of the Oslo Action Plan, we must take steps to ensure that all mine victims, including in rural and remote areas, have access to comprehensive rehabilitation services and psychological support services.

The EU is committed to assist national authorities in building their internal capacities to provide victim assistance in order to safeguard their people from the threat of mines, including mines of an improvised nature, and to assist mine survivors, affected families and communities in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive manner.

In the framework of the implementation of the ongoing Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/257 and with the input of the Committee on Victim Assistance, we extend our support to States via national and/or regional stakeholder dialogues in the Americas, Europe, Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East-North Africa, Horn of Africa and sub-Sahara 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 this context, the EU welcomes the ISU consultations with the respective Committees on hosting a workshop on victim assistance for members of the national victim's board in Colombia, plus a Dialogue and five preparatory meetings to support consultations and inputs with stakeholders for an updated Article 5 Work Plan. 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 is contributing to the Third Global Conference on Victim Assistance and the Rights of Mine Survivors to take place in Cambodia in October.

By adopting the Oslo Action Plan, 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 the Oslo Action Plan implementation and contribute towards a new Action Plan to be adopted by the international community in 2024.

Thank you, Mr. Chair