



Statement by Sri Lanka

Fifth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Item 8(d): Victim Assistance

27 November 2024, Siem Reap, Cambodia

(duration 5 minutes)

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has consistently demonstrated strong national ownership of its mine action programme. The government has ensured that national mine action structures are equipped and resourced to effectively fulfill their mandates. With this direction, we are successfully implementing our Mine Action Strategy, meeting set targets, including Victim Assistance initiatives and the completion of survey processes.

The National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) is committed to maintaining regular and structured coordination with the Government of Sri Lanka, international donors, operators, and partners. In close collaboration with these stakeholders, NMAC organizes bi-annual coordination meetings to foster transparent information sharing.

As a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Sri Lanka adopts a rights-based approach to Victim Assistance. The objective is the full and effective participation of Explosive Ordnance Victims in society on an equal basis with others.

The NMAC plays a facilitating role in VA and addressing strategic challenges related to information management, coordination, and awareness-raising. To this end, a VA committee has been established, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services, and Ministry of Justice. With the consent of the Secretaries of Health and Social Services, focal points have been appointed and have actively engaged in actions under the new framework over the past five months. This year, we have conducted six VA Committee meetings and plan to expand the committee to include senior officials from Mine Action organizations and other relevant institutions, under the guidance of the National Director of Mine Action.

I wish to highlight some of the key takeaways of these VA consultations that will be beneficial for other state parties in their VA endeavors. We will:

1. Schedule quarterly coordination meetings at both national and provincial levels to prevent duplication and ensure accurate information on EO victims.
2. Coordinate with the Ministry of Health's Acute Injury Division to include EO accidents as a cause of disability in injury surveillance system forms.

3. Collaborate with the Community-Based Rehabilitation programme of Department of Social Services to identify and support EO victims.
4. Identify policies and plans to integrate Victim Assistance into national frameworks, including the National Action Plan on Disability and the upcoming Disability Bill.
5. Verify current victim and incident data in IMSMA, and conduct an initial survey of 20% of mine victims to assess their current situation and needs.
6. Implement a Plan of Action for VA.

Our VA efforts seek to integrate needs of EO victims into broader government frameworks, including national plans, policies, databases, and services.

From 2002 to 2009, IMSMA recorded 1,765 victims of landmines and EO, with the majority in the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces. Since NMAC's establishment, landmine casualties have significantly declined, from 55 in 2010 to just 2 in 2023, reflecting the success of mine clearance, EO risk education, and preventive measures.

Our Plan of Action for 2024-2025 includes

1. Share survey findings of 20% of landmine victims identified in IMSMA with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services, and relevant stakeholders for targeted action.
2. Landmine and EO accidents will be recorded as a cause of disability in the national injury surveillance system.
3. A systematic data-sharing mechanism will be in place for consistent sharing of victim data and ensuring accurate and up-to-date disaggregated data on casualties, survivors, and indirect victims.
4. Inclusion of landmine accidents into injury surveillance forms and enhance victim identification and referral services by Ministry of Social Services.
5. Assess the profile of rehabilitation center patients and the inclusion of landmine victims within their services.
6. Publish a new Act to replace the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996, ensuring alignment with the UNCRPD standards.
7. Ensure victim assistance integration in the new Act, addressing socio-economic needs and rights of victim.
8. Ensure the availability of victim data for socio-economic and vocational training services for persons with disabilities.

Through these efforts, Sri Lanka reaffirms its commitment to a rights-based approach in victim assistance, enabling social inclusion of EO victims with dignity and equality.

Thank you.