

Regional Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Impact of Improvised Anti-Personnel Mines Within the Context of the Convention

13 – 15 February 2024 - Accra, Ghana

Victim Assistance: Opening Session

H.E, Vice President of Ghana, Distinguished Delegates, all Protocol observed, Allow me extend my appreciation to the Government of Ghana for hosting this important Regional Conference , that gives us an opportunity to jointly explore ways to address the Humanitarian Impact of Improvised Anti-Personnel Mines within the context of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Thank you to the EU for supporting and ISU for organizing this conference as we continue with the task of creating a safe and better environment without the threats of Improvised Anti-Personnel Mines a feat we are all too keen to see unfold.

Victim Assistance which is one of the core Pillars of the Mine Ban Treaty is a difficult one to tackle for many reasons. The continuous conflicts around the world and in Africa in this context, keeps on bringing a surge to the numbers of new victims, creating more burdens on states that most often have other issues to attend to.

The widespread impact of improvised anti-personnel mines contamination robs communities of the right to life and livelihoods, for generations. Nearly all African nations with the exception of a few have joined the MBT. Today your voice is critical to strengthening the international norm prohibiting use of antipersonnel mines, respect for international humanitarian law, and protection of civilians everywhere and sending a clear message that the vast majority of Africa stands behind this treaty protecting civilian lives, ensuring the human rights of survivors, preventing future humanitarian tragedies, and supporting community livelihoods.

Through its journey for a total eradication of antipersonnel mines, the Mine Ban Treaty has made tremendous success through collaborations. African States can do similar with the many Regional bodies it has such as African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD and many more to further Victim Assistance in the Region and make the lives of survivors better. This is also an opportune time to recall the role of the African Union in maintaining the promise that it made to affected communities, development and mine action as per the most recent African Union Resolution on Conflict Resolution, Peace and Security.

Now, reflecting on where we are today, no doubt we have come a long way: More than 80% of the world's countries have come on board of the treaty; large tracts of contaminated land in communities around the world have been freed of landmines; dozens of millions of landmine stockpiles destroyed; and most importantly, many potentially lost lives and limbs saved. The threat still exists as we witness new victims of improvised anti-personnel from current conflicts around the world. Implementation of victim assistance is now than ever, more crucial in these difficult times. I urge states and donor states to extend the much needed support towards VA.

Survivors need to be spared from going through more psychological trauma by having all states fulfill the vital promise of providing adequate assistance.

It is therefore imperative to raise awareness on the plight of victims of mine accidents, develop dedicated policy meant to benefit them so that the void of neglect that has remained for so long can be filled with activity and resources. For effective coordination of VA, planning and providing assistance should be coordinated among all stakeholders and coordinated at the various levels of government, international agencies, civil society, and private sector.

It is important that all sectors of the government are involved, including the large departments that have a significant impact on disability.

On behalf of the survivors everywhere, I urge African States to make all efforts possible to help prevent and eliminate suffering from these indiscriminate weapons so survivors can enjoy their fundamental rights.

Thank you.