Thank you, Chair,

Please also allow me to thank the coordinators for their updates.

The groundbreaking and legally binding victim assistance obligations staked out in the Convention on Cluster Munitions’ Article 5 are at the spearhead of the global effort to promote the rights of individuals with physical disabilities. Together with the comprehensive definition of victims in the CCM’s Article 2 and the commitments on assistance laid out in the Vientiane Action Plan, they have contributed to strengthening international practice and norms in the area of victim assistance and making it more visible.

The Mine Ban Convention, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions together constitute a mutually reinforcing framework on victim assistance. Synergies in the implementation of victim assistance and assistance to disabled persons under these different instruments should be promoted at the national level. This contributes to strengthening rights beyond what could be achieved under each specific instrument.

Over the past decade there has been a move from weapons-specific victim assistance and a medical approach to disability towards a more holistic rights-based approach. There is broad international agreement on the principles of such an approach, in particular it seems, amongst those working with disability issues or victim assistance in the field. Practitioners clearly see the logic of an integrated approach and the importance of non-discrimination. The challenge is to ensure that these principles are transformed into non-discriminatory practice, promoting the full inclusion in society of all persons with disabilities. This is relevant both for states with responsibilities under Article 5 and, in a wider perspective, for all those states that have responsibilities for persons with disabilities, which most likely includes all states.

Already existing structures and approaches should be used to recognise and address the rights and specific needs of victims of cluster munitions. Equality of opportunity and accessibility are key to ensuring the rights of survivors and other persons with disabilities. We would like to stress that the Convention on Cluster Munitions by itself is not sufficient to deliver on this. Adequate assistance must be provided by the relevant national and local authorities in-country, involving all relevant ministries, institutions and stakeholders in the process – not least persons with disabilities themselves, including victims of cluster munitions.

Norway remains fully committed to its obligations under Article 6 of the CCM, and is engaged in the field of victim assistance through cooperative partnerships with
affected states, civil society and international organisations. Norway provides earmarked support to assisting victims of cluster munitions and landmines, but perhaps most importantly provides support to countries’ social and economic development and to health and social budgets.

Norway has for many years been a key donor and supporter of survivor networks. These networks focus on peer support, advocacy and service provision and greatly contribute to the empowerment of survivors of landmines and cluster munitions. Cluster munition survivors also have the potential of working as advocates for and supporters of disability rights in general.

Chair,

The CCM and the detailed provisions in the Vientiane Action Plan provide an accurate and relevant basis for implementation in the field. Compliance with and implementation of these instruments is key in order to assure effective and gender-sensitive victim assistance and to remove the barriers in society that refrain survivors from enjoying their full rights.

Thank you.