

Workshop on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance in the context of Development, Human Rights and Humanitarian Initiatives

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I appreciate the invitation to participate in the opening ceremony of this workshop organized by Australia, Austria, Chile and Iraq on an integrated approach to victim assistance in the context of Development, Human Rights and Humanitarian Initiatives.

I am encouraged to see that States are taking steps to ensure they realize their victim assistance obligations not only through specific victim assistance efforts, whether funding, coordination, or otherwise, but also through broader initiatives. As demonstrated by several statements made during the inter-sessional meetings, and the very aim of this workshop, States are showing great willingness in ensuring that broader efforts in countries affected by mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war are also reaching and benefitting survivors and indirect victims.

I would like to invite States to continue deepening this “ dual or integrated approach to victim assistance” , which on the one hand proposes a non-discriminatory approach to specific victim assistance efforts, thereby also ensuring access to services and realization of rights of other persons with disabilities. On the other hand, this approach seeks to ensure that broader non-victim assistance labeled initiatives are equally non-discriminatory and reach survivors and indirect victims in the rural and remote areas where they mostly tend to live.

As you all know, high-level interventions on the situation of mine survivors can and have sometimes benefited the broad collective of persons with disabilities, for instance, I would like to highlight how victim assistance efforts prompted the start of services much-needed by all people with disabilities, particularly a time when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was not in force. As such, specific victim assistance efforts have often contributed to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in affected countries around the world. However much more could be done to make sure that those efforts are inclusive of all persons with disabilities.

As stated in the Maputo Action Plan, survivors with impairments caused by mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war *are* people with disabilities and their inclusion in broader framework and public policies on disability benefits is beneficial for the community as a whole. As per the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the guiding framework for actions to ensure medical

care, rehabilitation, psychological support but particularly social inclusion and participation for survivors, including access to education, employment and social protection.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me turn to a global process that will positively impact the lives of persons with disabilities, including survivors.. For the first time the internationally agreed development agenda, the new Sustainable Development Goals has explicitly referred to persons with disabilities, this a great opportunity that we can't miss. We must seize the process of implementation of the SDGs to promote greater commitment and international cooperation on the rights of persons with disabilities. Greater efforts are needed to improve access to inclusive education, support networks to live in inclusive communities, social protection, health, decent work, and other general services, enabling access to the exercise of other rights.

The challenges faced by all persons with disabilities, need to be addressed in unison and systemically. The fragmentation of actions on the basis of cause of impairment, whether mines, cluster munitions or other explosive remnants of war, traffic accidents, domestic violence or biological or genetic causes such diseases, among others; makes efforts inefficient and in the provision of certain benefits to one population over another foster inequality, as it is recognized in the text of the Convention on Cluster Munition.

I encourage you to continue supporting broader efforts that would benefit all persons with disabilities; raising awareness on the need to look at the different conventions as complementary tools to advance a common agenda; the promotion of the rights of those protected by the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions *and* the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the same line, all our efforts will reinforce the notion of leaving no one behind; for that we need to ensure that. 1) barriers to accessing services, benefits and resources, as well as to social participation, are identified and removed; 2) Data is disaggregated to identify who benefits from these broader efforts, including data that allows to identify if survivors, other persons with disabilities, and indirect victims are amongst the broader group of beneficiaries.

To achieve this, I invite you to work more and better together, joining forces, agreeing on common positions and pooling resources.

I want to thank again the States of Australia, Austria, Chile and Iraq, as well as Handicap International for the invitation.

Thank you.