



ICRC

Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Geneva, 25-27 November 2020

International Committee of the Red Cross Statement on Victim Assistance

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was the first weapons treaty to contain precise and detailed obligations to assist victims of a weapon. By including in the definition of “cluster munition victims” persons directly impacted by cluster munitions as well as their affected families and communities, the Convention established the most far-reaching obligations in terms of victim assistance ever included in a treaty of international humanitarian law. Today, victim assistance remains a central component of the Convention and its goal of reducing the unacceptable suffering caused by cluster munitions.

Since the last Review Conference, progress has been made: All 11 States Parties with cluster munition victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control provided them some form of assistance, and have designated a national focal point for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of policies and plans related to victim assistance at national level. Some States Parties have involved victims or their representative organizations in victim assistance or disability coordination mechanism.

However, several States Parties continue to face challenges in fulfilling the needs of cluster munition victims. In particular, the ICRC has repeatedly called on States Parties to address the gaps of qualified professionals and structures to provide physical rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities including cluster munition victims. In this respect, the ICRC continues to assist all persons with disabilities, including victims of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war through its Physical Rehabilitation Programme. In particular, we helped reduce the barriers to obtaining appropriate care by helping develop national capacities and by directly providing physical rehabilitation services. In 2019, more than 414'800 persons with physical disabilities benefited from 223 projects, such as physical rehabilitation centres, component factories and training institutions, supported by the ICRC. The Programme also supports persons with disabilities to participate fully in society, through for example microeconomic assistance, educational and vocational training, and sporting initiatives. Mental health and psychosocial support is also gradually integrated into the Programme, with a view to helping persons with disabilities to overcome the trauma of their experience and promote independence, social well-being and self-reliance. In 2019, 1'976 beneficiaries, including hospitalized weapon-wounded patients in facilities supported by the ICRC, benefited from such support, culturally and individually adapted to their psychological and physical recovery and rehabilitation needs.

Another major challenge is the insufficient financial resources, which is demonstrated by the fact that 10 States Parties have requested international assistance and cooperation regarding victim assistance in the past 5 years. The global COVID-19 pandemic risks aggravating the

funding shortage in addressing the needs of victims. Victim assistance is a long-term commitment that requires continued resources and political will from States Parties with cluster munition victims and other States in a position to provide assistance, as well as the Convention community as a whole.

Thank you.