

4th Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

11 September 2013

Statement by Austria on Victim Assistance

The Convention on Cluster Munitions that aims to *"to put an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions"* is an outstanding international legal instrument with regard to its particularly strong victim assistance provisions. Since its entry into force, the Convention has already contributed to impressive progress in the area of victim assistance. However, much remains to be done to adequately address the rights and needs of survivors, affected families and communities. How can the CCM community ensure that further progress is being made at a fast pace? We would like to offer four points of reflection to contribute to the discussion on the way forward:

First, to keep a focus on measuring progress: Data collection, needs assessment, monitoring of implementation and reporting are challenging tasks, and in particular if to be carried out in a conflict or post-conflict environment or in the context of development challenges. At the same time, these steps are crucial for the CCM in order to get to know about what are the needs, accomplishments and gaps in reaching out to victims, where do affected states need to focus on and where to they require cooperation and assistance from other States Parties. We therefore strongly support the Vientiane Action Plan as assisting States on the path towards measurable, progress oriented reporting, including through its time-bound obligations and hope that it will continue to be relevant in progress reporting in the field of victim assistance. While states with responsibility for victims have a particular experience, we believe that many more states can contribute with their experiences from related fields to a mutual understanding, an exchange of good practices and joint learning. For example, earlier this month, Austria's report on the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities was examined by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Areas addressed in the report included issues such as the quality of data available, the accessibility of services or advocacy measures undertaken by the government.

Second, to address implementation challenges through multi-disciplinary approaches: Austria and Colombia in May this year organized a workshop on assistance to child victims involving a range of stakeholders including UNICEF, the OHCHR, WHO, civil society experts and many others. Participants from all parts of the world affected by mines or ERW, including cluster munitions, recognized the particular vulnerability of children and identified a range of challenges they had in common when addressing the particular needs of children as victims, including insufficiencies in data collection, injury surveillance and use of available data, the need for a sensitive approach to different age- and gender-related needs, including psychological support, leisure and playtime as well as education and the needs of

family members of child survivors. Participants also shared the view that implementation challenges could most efficiently be tackled by increasing the international and regional exchange among experts across the various disciplines involved in the medical care, psychological rehabilitation or social and economic inclusion. Good practices and lessons learned from this work could then be channeled back into international meetings such as the states party meetings or expert meetings of the CCM and there be taken up as appropriate.

Third, to fully heed the call "nothing about us without us": Survivors, affected family and community members offer a vast experience and play a crucial role as advocates of their own rights. The inclusion of survivors, affected families and community members as experts in the policy and decision-making processes at all levels and at all stages is crucial to ensure effective victim assistance; we understand that more progress needs to be done in this area; it appears to us that here an increased exchange of practices with the work undertaken in the field of the rights of persons with disabilities could be promising. Many countries have experience in this field and are dealing with challenges in this area.

Forth, to contribute to the societal change necessary to remove barriers: The responsibility of States Parties to assist persons who have been affected by cluster munitions also bears a great potential for States Parties to play a leading role and act as multipliers in strengthening and promoting the rights of persons who have fallen victims from armed violence or who have been injured by other causes. It is the barriers of society that ultimately need to be removed in order to ensure survivors and persons with impairments the full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. Both, victim assistance and disability work can help to open up the debate for societal change and thereby work hand in hand.

Mr./Mme. Coordinator,

Before closing, we would like to express our appreciation to the President as well as the outgoing President and the Coordinators on Victim Assistance, Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, for their leadership. And we pay tribute to the continuous efforts undertaken on part of survivors, their representative organizations, UN entities, international and civil society organizations and experts. It is the partnership of all actors present in this room today that will make it possible for the Convention to work efficiently towards fulfilling its aim.

Thank you Mme./Mr. Coordinator.