



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement on Victim Assistance

Agenda item 10(d)

San José, 4 September 2014

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The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action¹ (IACG-MA), comprising 14 United Nations entities involved in mine action.

Victim assistance, with its rights-based approach and high standard for action, is at the core of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Indeed, the Convention has done much to advance the rights and address the needs of survivors and victims including immediate family members and impacted communities. Nevertheless, the United Nations would like to emphasize that under Article 5 of the Convention each State Party is obliged to ensure that survivors and victims' rights are fulfilled.

The United Nations is committed to Victim Assistance as expressed in its Strategy on Mine Action 2013 – 2018. The Strategy recognizes support to victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), including cluster munitions, as one of its four Strategic Objectives.

It is the position of the United Nations that assistance to victims of mine and ERW, including cluster munitions, must be systematically integrated into broader human rights, development, disability and health policies and programming. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the World Health Organization's Global Disability Action Plan 2014-2021 offer additional important frameworks for ensuring that the rights of survivors and victims of cluster munitions are respected. The United Nations strives towards meaningful synergies between all of these frameworks and will continue to ensure that the specific rights, needs and rehabilitation of victims of cluster munitions are taken into account.

At the national level, the United Nations continues to cooperate with authorities of affected countries to provide support in the implementation of the Convention.

¹ The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer status), and the World Bank (Observer status).

In 2013, UNDP support to affected states provided at least 170,000 victims in affected areas with sustainable employment opportunities, and ensured that more than 150,000 school children benefited from the construction of playgrounds which protect them from venturing into contaminated areas.

In Lebanon, UNDP supported the Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC) in the development of a Mine Victim Needs Assessment Survey to keep track of victims. In addition UNDP support enabled LMAC to produce an awareness raising booklet so that victims are aware of their rights, understand how to maintain their prosthesis and know how to manage their disability.

In Eritrea, a country where the majority of casualties are children, and where disability and victim assistance are a national priority, UNICEF supports the Government in strengthening orthopaedic workshops to expand the provision of services on mobility devices for child survivors and other children with disabilities, and to develop community-based referral services and protocols on victim assistance for child survivors, including psychosocial support.

In Afghanistan, UNMAS is financially supporting a number of victim assistance initiatives, including projects addressing physical rehabilitation, physical accessibility, peer support, vocational training, inclusive education, awareness, and advocacy for persons with disabilities, their families, communities and related government staff.

As a result of these efforts approximately 5,000 persons with disabilities caused by mines and ERW received physical rehabilitation services, 310 staff members at the three line ministries responsible for victim assistance were trained in management and as train-the-trainers on disability rights, 3,200 teachers, children with disabilities and their parents from 495 schools received Inclusive Education training and more than 110 ramps were built in 70 key public locations to improve access for persons with disabilities.

The United Nations General Assembly, in its latest resolution on assistance in mine action (A/RES/68/72), encourages affected States to mainstream assistance to victims of mines and ERW into their development plans and, at the same time, to ensure that victim assistance requirements are predictably funded. The United Nations calls upon States Parties to work with relevant national authorities and renew their commitment to action and funding to ensure that victims and survivors enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Finally, inclusion and participation are matters to which the United Nations attaches great importance. Just as victims of cluster munitions were instrumental in the development of the Convention, the voices of survivors and victims must be heard as States develop policies to meet their victim assistance obligations.

The United Nations notes its appreciation for the leadership of Afghanistan and Mexico as Coordinators of the Working Group on Victim Assistance.

I thank you, Mr. President.