

Statement on Victim Assistance
8th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
3-5 September 2018



Thank you,

The effects of cluster munitions on people are the reason for this convention. By the most conservative of estimates, the number of people killed or injured by cluster munitions over time is in the tens of thousands and is increasing every year. Beyond direct casualties, the total number of indirect victims who have suffered due to these weapons and had their rights impaired by cluster munitions is of course much higher and, to date, remains largely unrecorded.

Now, a decade after the convention was adopted we continue to report in the Cluster Munition Monitor on the lives impacted by these weapons. Victim assistance is a specific obligation under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Additionally, the convention's norm holds a broader promise for people affected by conflict, persons with disabilities and many other people with similar needs.

Each year we report on so many activities especially in the areas of health and rehabilitation, but also economic and psychosocial services. The fact that much has been done is backed by evidence. Also, many states have designated a focal point, and have adopted national plans. But we still need to see that governmental focal points have the authority and adequate resources to do what is required. We also noticed that sometimes a lot of time is spent developing the perfect plan, and that subsequently very little resources and energy are spent implementing it. Funding, will, and sustained efforts are needed to realise these plans. To be effective, the plans must take into account the obtainable resources that are required.

To date, ongoing assistance efforts notwithstanding, dedicated national and international resources are still very obviously not sufficient to meet the obligations to cluster munition victims. Innovative mechanisms of financing for cluster munition clearance and mine action are being discussed. But, more focus is needed on adopting similar means for increasing the number and level of services available and improving the quality of life of survivors, their families and communities.

Although progress in the fulfilment of rights can take time, is unacceptable that in most countries survivor networks that have been providing services, are now struggling to do their work because of decreasing resources. Our reporting shows that networks in States Parties Croatia, Mozambique, and Somalia were largely unable to implement essential activities. Many others have had to limit their work on indispensable services, for which they had been the most appropriate providers.

For all these reasons, victim assistance has to be included as a national priority in the work of States Parties. That means not only integrating it into national plans, laws and policies but also meaningfully including cluster munition victims and other people with similar needs in decision-making at the national and international levels. We will know that this has happened when states start reporting clearly on activities that they have undertaken based on the declared needs of survivors, and when survivors' networks start receiving more support for their work.