

## **Convention on Cluster Munitions, Intersessional Meeting 16-18 April 2013**

### **Session on Victim Assistance, 16 April 2013**

#### **Statement by Austria**

Thank you, Mr. Coordinator. We warmly thank the Coordinators for Victim Assistance, Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, for their leadership and commend them for their efforts. We also thank all states that have provided updates on their efforts to implement the obligations of the Convention related to victim assistance. We recognize that while the ultimate responsibility lies with the states affected, it is an obligation of all states parties to the CCM to provide cooperation and assistance in order to assist the survivors, their families and affected communities. Austria will continue to provide assistance to other States Parties in the area of victim assistance.

My delegation would like to take the floor to share some observations regarding the role of victim assistance in context of broader development, health and human rights policy efforts of states and the international community. This is an issue that the Coordinators have emphasized also in their reporting from the technical workshop which took place yesterday.

Victim assistance often doesn't require the development of new fields, but calls for existing medical and health care and social and economic services, rehabilitation programs and legislative and policy frameworks to adequately respond to the needs of citizens, including survivors of cluster munitions, their families and affected communities.

Survivors of cluster munitions as well as persons injured or disabled by other causes are often among the least empowered citizens and particularly vulnerable. They often face limited access to health and social care institutions, education and employment and livelihood opportunities more broadly. They will benefit from comprehensive health, development and human rights policies at the national level that take into account the specific needs that might arise for particular groups, in particular fields of assistance such as medical treatment or rehabilitation, or in particular communities and regions, such as remote areas.

In this context, Austria joins others and encourages the CCM community to look into how the cooperation and exchange of practices and experiences with related international legal instruments, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Protocol V of the Conventional Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disability, could be further increased. We believe that this would better reflect and correspond to the efforts on victim assistance carried out on the ground and that - ultimately - survivors themselves would benefit from this "joining forces".

We were reminded yesterday during the technical workshop on cooperation and assistance that - as we heard - to date 63 of the States Parties to the CCM are also States Parties to the CRPD. Moreover, the CRPD constitutes the primary international legal instrument to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities.

In this light, we welcome that states with victims take their national policies and/or action plans on disability into account and use them as a reference point when they report to the CCM community on their progress in ensuring access to services and removing barriers that exist for person with disabilities to fully participate in all aspects of life. We encourage more states to use the CRPD as a reference point when reporting on victim assistance efforts under the CCM.

Equally, we would like to note that reporting under the CRPD, in particular on Article 11, would provide States Parties with an opportunity to make reference to and reiterate the fact that they have undertaken obligations under various international humanitarian legal instruments to assist survivors, their families and affected communities. We would like to suggest these reference points to be taken into consideration also in the elaboration of the guide for transparency measures.

Finally, Mr. Coordinator, a key factor for effective victim assistance is the involvement of survivors as experts in all aspects of implementation. Survivors and their family members are experts about their needs and rights and should be involved in all phases of policy making and implementation.

I thank you for your attention.