

CMC Statement on Victim Assistance
Convention on Cluster Munitions Intersessional Meetings
Geneva, 16 April 2013



Thank you Mr Co-Coordinator.

My name is Moaffak Al-Khafaji, I am pleased to be taking the floor on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition as a campaigner, as the Director of the Iraqi Alliance for Disability Organizations and as a landmine survivor. Many survivors and other persons with disabilities in my country and elsewhere have not yet had the same opportunities as I have. That is why I am representing them here today. I want to speak to you about how to give them the chances that they deserve and how best to respect their rights.

The motto of survivors is “Nothing about us without us”. Under Article 5, the Convention asks states to “actively involve cluster munition victims and their representative organizations.” This is also in the Vientiane Action Plan. It is based on a core human right to **participate** in decisions affecting our lives. So far, many states have put in place coordination mechanisms where survivors are involved, and this is a very good start. But it is not enough to just give us a seat or to feed us information. States must ensure that survivors participate in a free, informed and meaningful way.

We should collaborate in setting up plans, programmes, legislation and policies, in making them known to other survivors, in implementing them, and in monitoring them. There are still some countries where none of this is happening.

Organizations of survivors and organizations of persons with disabilities, like the one I lead in Iraq, are regularly reaching out to governments: we organize events, we raise awareness about our rights and needs. Today, I would like to ask you to make this a two-way street: this means that governments should also be reaching out to survivors. In addition to involving us at the national level, states should also **include survivors on official delegations** to international meetings on cluster munitions.

Do you know that the majority of States Parties and signatory states where there are victims do not have a **national plan for victim assistance**? Adopting a plan is part of the obligations of Article 5, and is also in the Vientiane Action Plan. A plan helps to divide the large task of victim assistance into smaller, doable steps. It helps in managing national and international resources. The rights and needs of survivors and other persons with disabilities should also be considered and addressed through broader national action plans and human rights policies.

Central to victim assistance is ensuring that victims have access to adequate services. Improving the **accessibility** of services is one of the things you can do right now that will have the greatest impact on our daily lives. States Parties committed to do this immediately through the Vientiane Action Plan. Yet when I talk with my colleagues from other countries, I hear that there has been very little improvement in the accessibility of services in recent years, especially in remote and rural areas where many survivors are. I ask you to look at the examples of countries where there has been real

action on accessibility, such as Afghanistan, and apply good practices and lessons learned. It is one of the most concrete ways to turn the promises of the convention into reality for all survivors.

I call on all states to **join** the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to demonstrate your solidarity with people that have suffered from cluster munition use. I call on countries with cluster munition victims, such as Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Serbia and Vietnam, to accelerate your accession processes. You can act on behalf of all cluster munition survivors, by helping to strengthen the stigma against the weapon and promote the rights of the victims.

With your permission I will now give the floor to my colleague from the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, for additional remarks.

Thank you.