



## **United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

### **Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

#### **Statement under agenda item 8 d) Victim Assistance**

**26 November 2020**

*Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva office, UNMAS*

Mr. President,<sup>1</sup>

I have the pleasure of delivering the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA).<sup>2</sup>

Victim assistance is a set of concrete actions to meet the immediate and long-term needs of survivors, their families, mine-affected communities and persons with disabilities. It includes but is not limited to the following elements: emergency and long-term medical care, rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, and socio-economic inclusion. Victim assistance also requires States to develop and implement laws and policies that promote the rights of victims and to collect gender, age and disability disaggregated data on casualties, the needs of survivors and indirect victims, and available services.

The United Nations welcomes the efforts of States Parties to improve the quality and quantity of assistance to the victims of cluster munitions. Since the adoption of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Felix Baumann, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament and President of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action consists of twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.



Convention, an increasing number of States parties have designated national focal points, adopted national action plans relating to survivors and persons with disabilities which include them in decision and policy-making processes, and have integrated their victim assistance efforts into the broader disability sector.

In order to be effective and sustainable, victim assistance requires a holistic, non-discriminatory, multisectoral approach and needs to be integrated into broader frameworks relating to human rights, health, education and development. Coordination and shared analysis between different actors - e.g. through the UNMAS-led Mine Action Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster - protect affected communities and enable safe access to essential services.

While the collection of disaggregated data is important to ensure an adequate response, the United Nations also supports efforts to create synergies between the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other instruments which include obligations to provide assistance to victims of explosive ordnance, notably the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. For survivors of explosive ordnance accidents, it makes little to no difference which type of explosive ordnance caused their injuries and best practices established for victim assistance under other instruments should also be considered in implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The draft Lausanne Action Plan includes important actions States Parties will take on victim assistance. Just to name a few, States Parties committed to the development of victim assistance action plans, to multi-sectoral efforts in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to establish or strengthen casualty databases as well as national referral mechanisms and to ensure the accessibility of first aid, rehabilitation and psychological and psychosocial support services. Importantly, States Parties will also commit to the development of national policies and legal frameworks related to disability,



health, education, employment, sustainable development and human rights in a participatory manner.

On its side, the United Nations has a dedicated UN Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action, and has set a high-priority strategic outcome on the provision of assistance to “survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance for equal access to health and education and full participation in social and economic life” in the UN Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023. Amongst other things, United Nations programmes provide gender and age sensitive assistance, including healthcare, rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and social inclusion services. Assistance by the United Nations strives to complement national efforts and ensure access of victims to a broad range of services.

Excellencies,

In recent years, almost all reported cluster munitions casualties are civilians. The United Nations urges States Parties to provide dedicated financial support to Victim Assistance, which often remains under-resourced.

Thank you.