

Mr President,

Thank you for giving us the floor, and thank you to the coordinators for their report.

As the Lausanne Action Plan states, States Parties recognise that for victim assistance to be sustainable in the long term, it should be integrated into national policies and legal frameworks relating to the rights of persons with disabilities as well as into health, education, social, employment, poverty reduction and development plans supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This applies to affected states, but it also applies to other states parties in our policies for support.

Norway's overall aim, in our humanitarian strategy, as a donor country and as a humanitarian actor, is to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in humanitarian crises.

We have a particular focus on the protection of civilians against weapons and explosives during and after conflict, and this engagement derives from our obligations as a state party to the disarmament conventions. In particular, the Convention on Cluster Munitions was a groundbreaking instrument in that they set out clear obligations to provide assistance for victims.

In order to engage affected populations, humanitarian organisations need to ensure that all those affected can participate actively in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response on an equal footing and without discrimination.

This is about protecting human dignity and enabling people to take responsibility for their own lives and health. Vulnerable groups must be included in the planning and implementation of humanitarian efforts in order to ensure that the response is tailored to meet their respective needs.

Mr. President,

In Feb.2022, **Norway's strategy for disability-inclusive development (2022–2025), was launched:**

Equality for all

This strategy provides a foundation for future efforts to promote inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Norwegian development cooperation, included in humanitarian support. Norway has two primary objectives for its activities in this area:

- i) to promote compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and
- ii) to work proactively to support the core principle of the 2030 Agenda to 'leave no one behind'. This is part of the broader effort to promote gender equality and reduce disparities, the summary says.

The strategy applies also to Norway's efforts towards VA in our support to Mine Action. We will:

- work with partners (---) to increase reporting on and tracking of efforts to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities; and participation and involvement of persons with disabilities and the organisations' work;

- continue to support the organisations of persons with disabilities so that they can act as advocates and channels representing persons with disabilities – the survivors and victims of explosive ordnance - and enabling them to exercise and claim their rights;
- work to promote equal access for persons with disabilities to health care, and welfare services, (-) and enhance the ability of health personnel to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and to combat discrimination and attitudinal barriers;

In addition to our own strategies, we need the knowledge of the survivors and partners for our efforts to be relevant and effective.

What really matters is what happens in-country. At the end of the day, the extent to which victims and survivors actually have access to the assistance and services they are entitled to and need, should be our metric of success.

While our practices and understanding have developed over the years, still too many victims, survivors and indeed persons with disabilities in general are barred from accessing their rights, and do not have their needs met. The reasons for this are complex and often context-specific, and often related to lack of resources in general. But we should keep in mind that things do not change by themselves, and it is essential that we rise to the challenge and continue to look at how we can move things forward at the global level in a way that will have an impact at the national and local level – where you all come from and where the real expertise lies.

We need to be clear about what mine action actors can do, and what must be done by others. Assisting victims and survivors is a very different issue from many of the other obligations of the Conventions. There is still a need to unpack what exactly the role of the mine action community should be in meeting the needs of victims, including survivors and indirect victims.

Last but not least, we should never under-estimate the effects of risk education. All mine action operators carrying out risk education must make sure the education and materials take into account the different needs of different vulnerable groups.

Thank you.