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**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**  
**Convention on Cluster Munitions 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties**  
**Statement under agenda item 10 (d) – Victim Assistance**

Geneva, 11 September 2024

*Delivered by Ms. Christelle Loupforest, OiC, Geneva office, UNMAS*

Madam President,<sup>1</sup> Excellencies,

Most casualties from cluster munitions are civilians, with two thirds of them women and children.

Over the past five years, the United Nations has worked to achieve the following outcome: “survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance have access to health and education and participate fully in social and economic life”<sup>2</sup>. Under the United Nations Monitoring and Evaluation project, we tracked victim assistance, advocacy, inclusion, and coordination in countries where the United Nations has programmes. Between 2019 and 2023, we observed continuous improvements in the commitment to victim assistance, reflected in improved indicators almost across all areas. These include the number of countries that have a national disability policy; a victim assistance strategy, framework or plan; a national victim assistance representative or focal point; mapping of victim assistance service providers; referral pathways; mine action standards compliant with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and a victim assistance coordination mechanism. We believe that these measures make victim assistance efforts more sustainable, adequate, effective, and efficient.

The United Nations continued to promote the enhancement of economic opportunities and access to livelihoods for victims of explosive ordnance, survivors, and their families. Overall, the United Nations has positively supported the participation of victims in education and improved accessibility to public services for persons with disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico, Francisca E. Mendez Escobar.

<sup>2</sup> [UN Mine Action Strategy](#) (2019-2023).



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For example, UNICEF increased its assistance to child victims almost six-fold over the past two years (2022-23) compared to its former Strategic Plan (2018-21), with 5,706 victims supported annually in a dozen countries. In 2023, child-focused victim assistance interventions included the provision of emergency and continued medical care, assistive devices, livelihood support, cash assistance, mental health and psychosocial support and referrals to health services.

Excellencies,

Together, we must continue to advocate for the inclusion of survivors in education and sustain efforts to ensure equal inclusion of victims in employment and equal access to education for men, women, girls, and boys. These gains must be consolidated through continued investments, as victims require long-term, multi-sectoral support to rebuild their lives.

Meeting the needs of victims remains a significant challenge in situations of armed conflict. Victim assistance continues to be one of the least funded pillars of mine action. As a result, there is insufficient capacity to deliver appropriate interventions.

For example, in 2023, the United Nations reached 4,548 people with victim assistance in Afghanistan but was unable to meet the needs of all victims due to funding shortages.

In Lebanon, the lack of funding is exacerbating a deteriorating humanitarian situation. As the cumulative number of victims rises, economic desperation pushes residents toward unsafe practices. The absence of personnel in key ministries such as health, education, social affairs, and labor is significantly delaying the critical assistance needed for these victims.



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The suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions in different parts of the Syrian Arab Republic are beyond description. An analysis by the Mine Action Area of Responsibility indicates that, of the 834 deaths caused by explosive remnants of war in Syria in 2023, one-third were caused by cluster munitions. Clearance efforts and victim assistance remain critical priorities in the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic and funding is urgently required to meet the needs of victims in coming months.

These are only a few examples. There are many more. The United Nations calls on States Parties to integrate victim assistance into government mine action plans, in line with IMAS 13.10 on victim assistance in mine action, and to fund victim assistance in humanitarian responses and even, if relevant, in geographic areas outside of government control.

Excellencies,

Disability, gender, age and other diversity factors intersect and increase victims' vulnerability. These factors should be taken into account in the planning of victim assistance efforts so that services are adapted to the needs and realities of different groups. Action 31 of the Lausanne Action Plan stresses the need to collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender, age and disability to understand the priorities of victims and insert this data into a centralised database.

Mainstreaming gender, age, disability and the diverse needs and experiences of populations in affected communities is a cross-cutting strategic outcome for the United Nations whose aim is to support empowerment, gender equality, and inclusion. The United Nations Monitoring and Evaluation five-year survey showed increased commitment to mainstreaming gender across mine action at the national level. The overall average percentage of countries having reported a gender strategy for mine action increased from 20% in 2018 to 46% in 2023.



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More United Nations programmes are supporting national authorities by providing technical assistance and training on how to mainstream gender, age, disability and diversity aspects in mine action, with the percentage increasing from 38% in 2018 to 54% in 2023.

Gender parity across all organizational levels significantly improved, with women now comprising 40% of the workforce in 2023, up from 22% in 2018. We acknowledge that further efforts are needed to consolidate progress towards greater gender equality in mine action and in programming that is more age, disability and diversity sensitive. Further improvements here would also have a positive impact on victim assistance responses.

In-depth country studies also help discern progress and challenges. As part of mainstreaming gender using the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action, the United Nations Development Programme recently completed a study in the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the intersection of gender, poverty, ethnicity, and disability within the unexploded ordnance sector. This study analyses the systemic inclusion of gender and diversity issues in its policy and programming and proposes a four-year Gender and Diversity Action Plan (2023-2026). We would encourage more such studies that also enhance the understanding of how gender, age and diversity could help improve victim assistance responses.

I thank you for your attention.

**END**