

CMC Statement on Victim Assistance

*Third Review Conference, Convention on Cluster Munitions
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Thank you, Mr. President

Let me begin with a story.

A few months ago, I was driving to meet some friends who use wheelchairs, close to the new cluster munition contaminated areas on the Cambodian border. Suddenly, my phone rang. Srey Pich was crying.

“The cluster bombs are falling and we had to leave our homes. My wheelchair could not fit on the oxcart. Please, can you find me and bring another wheelchair to me?”

Some hours later, we found her lying in a hammock under a tree, surrounded by muddy puddles. Her smile when she saw her wheelchair was a joy. And so was the beautiful baby she gave birth to one month later.

That is the reality that victims of cluster munitions live with.

New cluster munition contaminated areas appeared in my country, Cambodia, in 2025 and 2026. When I asked Srey Mom, another of my friends who uses a wheelchair and lives in the middle of these new hazardous areas, what she needs most, she said:

“I want to be free from fear.

I want my child to be safe. I want my land to be safe so I can farm. I want my friends to be able to go back home and live again.”

So my first message is our basic CMC call: Stop producing cluster munitions. Stop using them. Stop making money from selling them. And clear them quickly.

This message comes from Cambodia, Ukraine, the Middle East, Myanmar, Africa, and everywhere people are affected by these weapons.

When we ask survivors what gives them hope, we hear different answers in different places. Some say wheelchairs or new legs. Others say a grant to start a small shop, a job, or help to rebuild a house destroyed by bombs.

And especially, we value visits from other survivors – people who have suffered like us, but who have struggled, succeeded, educated their children and built happy lives. They show us what is possible.

Here in beautiful Laos, cluster munitions have claimed victims for decades. My parents experienced the trauma of that same war in Cambodia, as cluster bombs rained down in the east and landmines were planted in the west. I was born in a refugee camp because of this.

For the last 25 years, I have worked with other survivors, many of them persons with disabilities. Laos and other countries have established some very good rehabilitation programmes. But people living in remote areas still often cannot access the services they need. This remains a challenge for our Convention and for all of us.

We greatly appreciate the legal and health improvements made by governments in some countries. But much more needs to be done.

Accessibility, physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support and the rights of persons with disabilities all need greater attention. Survivors must also be able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Some donor countries have been generous, and for this we are grateful. But we make a strong plea for increased and sustained funding for victim assistance. When assistance is integrated into broader health, disability and development programmes, we must make sure that cluster munition victims are not forgotten or left behind.

In this new age of artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons, we call on all nations to remember the dignity of every human being, especially the most vulnerable.

Use your knowledge, your creativity, your financial resources, and the wisdom humanity has accumulated to strengthen the lives of people who suffer from war, injustice and poverty. To waste these precious resources on weapons that destroy one another is inhumane and a tragic waste of our collective potential.

Let us protect our ban.

Let us protect lives.

And let us free people from fear.

Thank you.