



Statement delivered by South Africa on Victim Assistance 9(e)

**Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Vientiane,
Lao People's Democratic Republic 14 to 18 September 2026**

Mr President,

South Africa extends its appreciation to the Coordinators on Victim Assistance, Niger and Japan, on the report of the status of implementation, progress made and challenges encountered in fulfilling Article 5 obligations since the Second Review Conference.

We consider victim assistance to be at the heart of the Convention's humanitarian mandate and welcomes the progress achieved by the affected States Parties in implementing victim assistance obligations and acknowledges the important contributions of survivors, affected communities, international organisations, the ICRC, the United Nations system and civil society partners in advancing a victim-centred approach.

We believe that victim assistance should not be viewed solely as a humanitarian response but as an integral component of sustainable development, human rights, disability inclusion and social justice. Survivors of cluster munitions, their families and affected communities must be empowered to participate fully and effectively in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life.

South Africa therefore supports efforts aimed at ensuring that victims and affected communities are systematically included in national health systems, rehabilitation programmes, social protection mechanisms, disability-inclusive policies, education services, skills development initiatives, employment opportunities and community-based support programmes. Such an approach would promote long-term resilience, dignity and self-reliance while avoiding the creation of parallel systems that may be difficult to sustain.

In the African context, several countries continue to face competing development priorities and resource constraints, we believe victim assistance should be integrated, wherever possible, into existing national development frameworks and public service delivery mechanisms. Mainstreaming victim assistance within broader health, disability and social protection programmes can contribute to more sustainable and nationally owned implementation while ensuring that no survivor is left behind.

South Africa further recognises that access to rehabilitation services, assistive devices, psychosocial support and community-based care remains a significant challenge in many developing countries. Greater investment is therefore required in strengthening national health systems, rehabilitation capacity and disability support services, particularly in rural and underserved areas where access to services remains limited.

We also highlight the importance of meaningful and effective participation by survivors and affected communities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of victim assistance policies and programmes. Nothing concerning victims should be decided without their active involvement. Their lived experiences provide critical guidance for developing responsive and effective assistance measures.

Furthermore, South Africa supports the continued efforts to collect and analyse disaggregated data, including data relating to age, gender and disability, in order to better identify needs, target resources and measure progress. We further encourage enhanced cooperation among States Parties to facilitate the exchange of good practices and lessons learned regarding survivor inclusion and disability-responsive programming.

Mr President,

As we negotiate the Vientiane Action Plan, South Africa supports strengthened commitments that, promote the full inclusion of cluster munition victims within national healthcare, rehabilitation, disability and social protection systems and strengthen survivor participation and leadership in decision-making processes amongst others while enhancing international cooperation and assistance for victim assistance programmes, particularly in developing countries and affected African States.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of our Convention will be measured not only by the destruction of weapons and clearance of contaminated land, but also by the extent to which survivors and affected communities are able to live with dignity, achieve their full potential and participate equally in society.

I thank you.