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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement under agenda item 9 (e)

Victim Assistance

Vientiane, Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Delivered by XXXX

Mr. President,¹

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) comprising the United Nations entities involved in mine action.²

Excellencies,

Today, cluster munition attacks and cluster munition remnants continue to affect populations across the world. Everyday victims and survivors, their families and communities are suffering from the life-changing impact of Cluster Munition injuries. For some this will be immobility, inability to work, prohibition from schooling or additional exhausting caring responsibilities. For others it will be stigma and jarring all-encompassing physical pain. These impacts extend far beyond the immediate injury, affecting the enjoyment of a range of human rights, including the rights to health, education, work and an adequate standard of living.

¹ H.E. Thongsavan PHOMVIHANE, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR.

² 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) is an observer.



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In assessing implementation of Article 4 we witness both encouraging progress and alarming gaps. Experiences from affected countries demonstrate that meaningful assistance is possible when national authorities, humanitarian actors, organizations of persons with disabilities, and donors work together. They also highlight the severe consequences when coordination and resources fall short.

There are many examples of progress in Victims Assistance and of developing best practice. For example:

In South Sudan, partnerships between the National Mine Action Authority, government institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities, rehabilitation providers and protection actors have strengthened referral pathways for survivors. A recent workshop demonstrated that effective victim assistance relies on strong connections between mine action, health, rehabilitation, protection, and disability inclusion systems, rather than isolated interventions.

In Afghanistan, victim assistance and disability inclusion are being integrated across mine action activities, while survivors and persons with disabilities are actively participating in coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes. National efforts to strengthen referral systems, rehabilitation services and disability-inclusive policies demonstrate the importance of embedding victim assistance within broader national systems.

However this much still to be done; with Victim Assistance remaining one of the most under-resourced and difficult elements of treaty implementation. States Parties with ongoing



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Victim Assistance obligations often do not have the resources or infrastructure to be able to deliver on all provisions of Article 4. Even when services and expertise are available, they may not be appropriately dispersed or accessible. In many cases Victim Assistance services are reliant on a patchwork of government provision, NGOs, international support, and volunteers. Such an ecosystem is precarious and vulnerable to collapse. This is the opposite of what is required. Victim Assistance is a multi-year, multi-decade, and often lifelong process – one that required sustained investment, commitment, and resilience. It should be understood not only as the provision of emergency or medical support, but as a long-term commitment to ensuring victims can fully participate in society on an equal basis with others.

At the same time, experiences across several Cluster munitions contaminated contexts such as remind us of the human cost of underfunding. Funding cuts have significantly reduced victim assistance services despite ongoing and increasing need. Victims have been forced to discontinue treatment, face preventable complications, and struggle to access specialized care. These examples, which are happening everyday across several cluster munitions affected areas, are a stark reminder that when victim assistance funding disappears, survivors can be left without life-saving support and exposed to preventable disability, poverty, and exclusion.

Excellencies,

The challenges facing Victim Assistance are well known and persistent: Sustained and prolonged demand, material and access challenges, funding, and resource shortfalls. Yet the need and imperative to assist those whose lives have been blighted by these weapons is clear and compelling. The United Nation calls on States Parties and partners to strengthen investment in Victim Assistance, promote disability-inclusive approaches, and ensure that victims are at the centre of



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all efforts, including through their meaningful participation in decision-making and the design, implementation and monitoring of Victim Assistance programmes. Together, we can transform obligations under Article 4 into tangible improvements in the lives of victims, their families and affected communities.

END