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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention: Twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties
(20 - 24 November 2023)

[Statement under agenda item 10a – Victim Assistance]

Geneva, Tuesday 21 November 2023

Delivered by UNMAS

Mr. President,¹

This statement is delivered on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA).²

From 2018 to 2022, United Nations mine action programmes recorded 59,612 explosive ordnance casualties resulting in 20,562 deaths and 39,050 injured. Following an accident involving explosive ordnance, in addition to psychological trauma, survivors incur lasting physical suffering and cognitive impairment. Victim assistance is essential to address their immediate and long-term needs and rights.

¹ H.E. Mr. Thomas Göbel, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament, President of the Twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties (21MSP).

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) and the World Bank are observers.



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Most accidents occur in protracted conflicts where health care systems have been weakened by years of war. The situation is particularly difficult in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and Somalia where access by survivors to medical care, rehabilitation and psychosocial support often depends on humanitarian organizations with limited resources. Where possible, the UN is coordinating with national and international organizations to improve service mapping and referrals, but sometimes there are simply no services.

The UN has named the CEO of Legacy of War Foundation, Mr. Giles Duley, as the UN Global Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Conflict and Peacebuilding Situations to raise awareness of these challenges, rally support for sustainable solutions, and help ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities, including explosive ordnance victims, are included in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Several States are already providing generous support to promote the safety, dignity and rights of persons with disabilities; however, much more is needed, and we take this opportunity to encourage all States Parties to allocate funding for victim assistance and disability inclusion in their national budget and foreign aid.

We would like to thank Cambodia, the European Union and the Implementation Support Unit for convening the Third Global Conference on Assistance to the Victims of Anti-Personnel Mines and other Explosive Ordnance in a Disability Rights Context in October. One of the main conclusions of the conference was the importance of having an active National Coordinator to



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steer a multisectoral approach to victim assistance and ensure that the ministries of health and social affairs address the needs and rights of survivors and their families. Another recommendation is to strengthen the coordination between mine action and emergency health response in remote contaminated areas to reduce the mortality rate which stands at 35%³. WHO also stressed the importance of integrating access to assistive technologies through health systems and ensuring adequate referrals within health and between health and other sectors.

The International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10 on Victim Assistance, developed by the IMAS Review Board and endorsed by the UN, was published in early 2023 and describes the roles and responsibilities of national mine action authorities and national mine action centers working in support of relevant government entities charged with coordinating and providing victim assistance. The UN encourages all states to translate this international standard into national mine action standards to facilitate its implementation and to better address victims' needs and rights.

Thank you.

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³ IACG MA Dashboard - UN M&E system. Global Casualty Trend 2015-2022.
<https://www.mineaction.org/en/interactive-dashboard-of-un-mine-action-strategy>