



## **United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

### **13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

#### **Statement on Victim Assistance**

##### **Agenda item 10 (a)**

**Geneva, 3 December 2013**

#### **Delivered by UNMAS**

#### **on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA)**

I deliver the following statement on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprised of the United Nations Departments, Agencies, Funds, and Programmes involved in mine action.

Victim assistance remains one of the core elements of the Convention and an area of particular interest for the United Nations.

The recent General Assembly resolution on Assistance in Mine Action has not only reaffirmed the special relevance of victim assistance to mine action and the mine action community, but also reinforced its importance by adding two new paragraphs on victim assistance.

Paragraph 9 encourages Member States to support victims' access to appropriate medical care, physical and sensory rehabilitation, psychological support, education and skills training and income-earning opportunities and to provide those services to all, regardless of gender, age or socioeconomic status.

Paragraph 10 encourages the provision of capacity-building assistance to affected countries in order to integrate assistance for victims into their national policy frameworks on health care, social services and disability, including development by relevant civil society organizations and other relevant entities including existing United Nations expertise in those matters.

The IACG-MA supports the full integration of victim assistance into broader development, health, and disability frameworks in order to ensure sustained support to victims from landmines and ERW. The members of the IACG-MA believe that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) offers an essential legal framework to ensure that the fundamental human rights of survivors are at the heart of any mine action programme, calling for an inclusive society in which persons with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with others.

At the same time, Mr President, we need to be realistic and accept the fact that this process of integration will not happen overnight. It will take time before the benefits of this integration are tangible and quantifiable. Prematurely dismantling existing victim

assistance programmes and eliminating victim assistance dedicated-funding is therefore not a solution and puts at risk a significant part of the progress already accomplished. We acknowledge that there are different views in this regard. We plan to expand our consultations on this matter to better inform the elaboration of a new UN victim assistance policy.

This year UNMAS Afghanistan supported a number of victim assistance projects including a physical rehabilitation project providing orthotics and prosthetics to 470 people, and another one on physical accessibility in Kabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Herat including the building of 110 ramps in key public locations.

UNICEF is currently developing “child-focused victim assistance programme guidance” to support UNICEF country offices to establish new age and gender-sensitive victim assistance programmes for children. For example in Eritrea, a country where the majority of casualties are children, and where disability and victim assistance are a national priority, UNICEF supports the government in strengthening orthopaedic workshops to expand the provision of services on mobility devices for child survivors and other children with disabilities, and to develop community-based referral services and protocols on victim assistance for child survivors, including psychosocial support.

Over the past two years, as a result of UNDP support in capacity building management of mine action in the areas of clearance, land release and victim assistance, more than 5,100 people were provided with sustainable livelihood opportunities in twenty mine action programmes. UNDP supported mine action centres to facilitate vocational training, access to small grants, livestock, psycho-social rehabilitation, and government employment as part of victim assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Iraq, Tajikistan, and Lebanon.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre managed by UNMAS supported the drafting of CRPD implementation law as well as the mobilizing of resources for the economic reinsertion and physical rehabilitation of landmine and ERW victims.

UNMAS South Sudan awarded a grant to Handicap International to enhance quality of life for landmine and ERW victims as well as for other persons with disabilities. Further support is being provided to advocacy efforts for the adoption of the National Disability Bill, and accession to the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In Sudan, UNMAS supported two victim assistance projects, one in Blue Nile and one in South Kordofan, which are implemented by landmine victim association from national NGOs and whose objective is to reach 275 mine/ERW victims and provided them with socio-economic reintegration, psychological support and advocacy initiatives.

Finally, the United Nations extends a warm welcome to all national focal points for victim assistance and/or disability present this week and wishes them productive discussions.

I thank you.