

**Intersessional meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty
Statement on Victim Assistance
19 May 2016**



A shorter version of this statement was delivered.

[Speaker #1]

This is an informal working meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty, where the idea of “completion” is on our minds. One thing that we need to work out is -- what does it mean to complete victim assistance under the treaty by 2025? It should mean making it sustainable for the lifetime of victims. We look forward to hearing more on these issues from the MBT VA committee Belgium, Colombia, Thailand and Senegal at a lunchtime event today. We know some of you spent the day exploring this yesterday at the initiative of the Coordinators on Victim Assistance and on International Cooperation and Assistance of the CCM Australia, Austria, Chile and Iraq, with technical support from ICBL-CMC member Handicap International.

As specified in the Maputo Action Plan all States Parties should seize every opportunity to improve assistance to survivors by engaging in the work of international, regional and national instruments on human rights, health care, labor, and social protection. But this is not enough if assistance cannot be carried out in the communities where survivors live. The Maputo Action Plan commits to providing referrals for survivors to existing services. To make this a reality, we need resources for the local groups that most often make these vital links between survivors and programs, between victims and assistance. The amounts of funding needed are not large, but they require some thought and planning. This is a working meeting, and we are asking you to work on it. States

Parties in this room have also committed to enhancing the capacity of our survivor representative organizations, to ensure the inclusion and the active participation of victims in all matters that affect them. We need to see an upturn in participation and lasting solutions.

[Speaker #2]

Here are some facts. Data compiled by the *Landmine Monitor* shows progress. In the past year, coordination was active in some two-thirds of State Parties. In some cases, states coordinated assistance and offered many services. But in many cases, much of the work is done by international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and especially by networks of survivors and other Disabled Persons Organizations at the local level. Frameworks and strategies relevant to victim assistance include the CRPD, commitments on humanitarian assistance in armed conflict, the WHO and its Disability Plan, ILO work on disability employment and livelihoods, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, these the promises of those instruments are not yet realized on the ground.

What we hear now on a daily basis is that—as also just noted now by the delegate from DRC in his statement—the funding available for victim assistance at the local level is reaching the point of catastrophic deficiency in many countries.

This information comes from our researchers, survivor leaders, victim assistance service providers, and concerned activists and academics — as well as from other information providers. In the Americas for example, there are so few ongoing activities due to funding cuts that sometimes it is hard to get reporting

from programs that were once the backbone of national assistance efforts. From many regions, we are being given well-developed project proposals when previously there would have been well-implemented activity reports.

This lack of resources is being felt in states with ongoing casualties and mine contamination such as Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and, Tajikistan; as well as those that completed their clearance commitments, including Albania, Uganda, and Mozambique; and also those experiencing conflict, such as Yemen and Iraq.

There is a lot of room now for champions among donors, including non-traditional donor States Parties, to come forward.

This is not only the responsibility of affected states. Donor states are recognizing the need for ensuring that broader development and human rights programs reach the victims. However, although some efforts are being made at the level of policy and strategy, when it comes to implementation of cooperation, very little is done to ensure that this objective is reached. This was the finding of a questionnaire sent to donor countries by concerned Mine Ban Treaty States Parties which also chair the CCM VA and cooperation committees and shared by Handicap International.

[Speaker #3 – In Spanish]

I refer to now the requirement for international cooperation, and for resources to be made available for victim assistance. I draw your attention to the close connection between the cooperation commitments of Article 6.3 of the Mine Ban Treaty and Article 32 of the CRPD. Both require the allocation of funds for assistance and rights. Donor countries' efforts need also to reach affected communities Justas well as bilateral cooperation or multilateral grants. We know that many Disabled Persons Organizations, including survivors' representative organizations, have the essential capacities to implement activities. They can manage both public and private funding, including dedicated donor funding specifically channeled to their own activities. States need to help by facilitating linkages between Disabled Persons Organizations and international cooperation and establish methods to accomplish this. Donor states need to pay attention to this process and can consider solutions at this working meeting of the treaty.

We realize that in these challenging times there are great needs in many places, and the line between humanitarian and development responses is blurred. Many victims in remote areas and among marginalized groups, refugees and displaced persons and other people in conflict zones, require support. It is a moral obligation that no one should be left behind –be they in rural areas, in refugee camps or in urban centers –and victim assistance commitments be fulfilled. We invite you to join us tomorrow for an ICBL side event discussing how this can become a reality specifically in the many States Parties that also experience fragile situations and complex transitions.