ICBL statement on Victim Assistance
20th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, 21-25 November 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

As articulated in the 2021 IMAS 13.10 on Victim Assistance in Mine Action, victim assistance should be implemented according to an integrated approach. This requires on the one hand, specific VA efforts on the part of the mine action actors, and on the other the conduct of broader VA efforts by non-mine action actors. In regard to broader VA efforts, at the Fourth Review Conference States Parties recognized that VA must be integrated into wider national policies, plans and legal frameworks, particularly those addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. Two years on, less than half of the States Parties with a recognized responsibility for mine and explosive remnants of war victims had plans in place to address the needs and gaps in assistance. Many still need to draft or adopt a relevant national strategy.

Moreover, in 2021 dedicated international financial support from the global mine action budget for VA reached its lowest level recorded since 2016 despite the growing needs. Alarmingly, the Landmine Monitor found that, only 7 of the 34 States Parties with significant numbers of survivors received direct VA funding in 2021.

Healthcare and rehabilitation services were particularly under-funded, often lacking expertise, infrastructure and materials, while facing challenges of accessibility. Support for these services is all the more crucial as healthcare systems have been strained and are, at times, even on the verge of collapse due to crises and conflict in several States Parties.

That is why, we, survivors, are urging all States parties, those affected or those in a position to provide international assistance, to comply with the VA provisions of the Treaty.

In 2021, according to the latest Landmine Monitor data, at least 5,544 people have been killed or injured by mines and ERW. Each of these number represent a life disrupted; a person in need of timely first-aid and emergency medical services. Delays in reaching health services mean the difference between life and death and can lead to life-long complications.

Casualty numbers also point to the need for longer-term medical services such as rehabilitation as well as access to assistive devices that are costly. Psychosocial and psychological support is also needed to assist people in coping with their new-found reality and to re-engage in everyday activities. Rehabilitation services are too often overlooked and not integrated into national health systems.

Ultimately, behind these numbers is also the real challenge and the need for us to fully participate socially and economically into society. In many affected States Parties, accessing economic opportunities is still difficult for survivors and other persons with disabilities.

I am standing in front of you today as this is also the case for me. I am one of the victims of a landmine and a person with disability. However, regardless of that fact, the most beautiful
things in my life happened to me after I became a person with a disability. I graduated from college, got a master’s degree, got a decent job, became a multi-awarded top athlete and a respected member of my local community. I also got married, and had three children with my beautiful wife. Indeed, I was lucky because I had tremendous support from my family and friends. Unfortunately, all over the world, and perhaps in the countries you come from, there are many victims who have not been so lucky and need support. With your help, their lives can be successful and they can fully enjoy their rights in the societies in which they live.

Now, 25 years after the adoption of the Treaty, much more needs to be done to address the needs and challenges that we, victims of landmines and other ERW, are facing. States need to continue strengthening databases on victims and their needs. They must also develop national referral mechanisms and directory of services to facilitate access to services. Participation of survivors’ representatives in this process, and any other decision-making process that affect us, is essential. Delegates and more specifically VA experts who attend MSP and intersessional meetings should not attend for the sake of attending but should act responsibly in their respective countries.

Today, States, mine action operators, and others service providers, have at their disposal the range of tools needed to comply with victim assistance obligations. We call the mine action sector to fully implement the IMAS 13.10 on VA in Mine Action and the VA actions of the Oslo Action Plan. Adopting and implementing an integrated approach to VA is key to ensuring our access to comprehensive gender, disability and age sensitive services.

Your increased involvement and contributions will be a huge support to landmine and ERW victims, for a better quality of life, both for survivors and for families as well as for the wider local community, ultimately making this world a better place to live.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank the Committee and the ISU, in particular Mr. Firoz Ali Alizada, for all their efforts.

Thank you.