

Statement on Victim Assistance

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10th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Wednesday, 1 December 2010

At the Second Review Conference to the Mine Ban Treaty, States Parties agreed upon a concrete and forward-looking plan of action. No less than 11 actions of the Cartagena Action Plan (or "CAP") provide comprehensive steps to ensure that survivors see concrete and lasting improvements in their lives. We were pleased to hear today 24 states with significant numbers of survivors speak about their efforts to implement Actions 23 to 33 of the CAP.

Early this year, at the beginning of the period of the implementation of the CAP, only 10 countries with significant numbers of survivors had, as called for in the CAP, "collected all necessary data by assessing the needs and priorities of mine victims and the availability and quality of relevant services." In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda, data collected was used by victim assistance stakeholders for planning purposes and/or to improve referral of survivors to existing services. At least two others, Angola and Croatia, were developing surveys in 2010. Among the relevant States Parties that should be encouraged and assisted to take concerted efforts to assess survivors' needs are Afghanistan, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Serbia, and Turkey. We call on those states that still lack comprehensive understanding of the needs of survivors in their countries to take swift action to remedy this gap.

The CAP underscores the importance of coordination, monitoring, and planning to improve victim assistance. At the start of 2010, 16 States Parties had specific victim assistance coordination mechanisms, while Croatia and DRC established a coordination group during the year. However, some coordination mechanisms were practically inactive or were narrowly focused on data collection. Just 11 States Parties had national victim assistance or disability plans, and only El Salvador and Cambodia reported mechanisms to monitor the plan's implementation. Much remains to be done therefore to develop effective coordination mechanisms that are comprehensive of all aspects of victim assistance

Under the CAP, States Parties also need to ensure that coordination mechanisms as well as other aspects of national victim assistance activities are inclusive of landmine survivors and their representative organizations. States Parties also committed to including survivors on delegations at international meetings. In 2010, some states began providing more distinct updates on how survivors were included in victim assistance planning and coordination. For example, Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Jordan, Sudan, and Uganda had disability coordination mechanisms that included mine/ERW survivors. Increased participation of survivors' in these mechanisms is critical. Many more States Parties also need to do more to share this information as well as information about survivors' participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of services.

From our side, the ICBL continued to support VA focal points in over 30 countries, including 24 States Parties, to work with their governments throughout 2010. Such collaborations in countries like Afghanistan, DRC and Yemen successfully strengthened efforts to improve physical accessibility, data collection and victim assistance planning. Civil society organizations including mine/ERW survivors, together with the ICBL, remain active and available to support government VA focal points with on-the-ground knowledge and practical experience.

The CAP stresses a continued need to improve the quality of and access to services. By the end of 2009, reports indicated that most survivors had not experienced significant overall improvements in quality or access to a range of necessary services, with improvements seen in just a few countries. At the same time, nearly as many countries reported a decline in services, due mostly to changed security situations and global economic conditions. One important and viable means to promote access to equal opportunities for survivors is inclusive development. For example, in 2010, relevant ministries in Afghanistan met with survivors and other persons with disabilities to work together in designing development plans to increase physical accessibility. Cambodia introduced national community-based rehabilitation guidelines in 2010 and planned to transfer management of rehabilitation centers to national ownership to ensure sustainability. Improvements in access and quality of assistance will have the greatest impact on the lives of survivors if they are both implemented soon and made sustainable for the future.

Finally, CAP Action #34 calls on States Parties to identify national resources to meet treaty obligations, including victim assistance, as well as any international resources needed, by no later than this meeting. All the States Parties with significant numbers of survivors who spoke today raised the issue of a lack of resources and the importance of funding for their future work. They need to mobilize more national resources and also ask for international assistance. However only El Salvador, Tajikistan and Jordan indentified the amount of funds needed for their victim assistance efforts in line with action 34. States Parties that have not yet prepared and reported on the resource commitments and needs for victim assistance should do so in 2011 transparency reporting, the June 2011 intersessional meetings, and the November 2011 Meeting of States Parties. For more complete reporting, starting in 2011, States Parties could use the comprehensive victim assistance reporting format developed under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as following the co-chairs' recommendations.

In conclusion, we, ICBL organizations and survivors, would once again like to stress our desire to work in partnership with states. Together we can make a difference. With four years to go to fulfill the CAP's potential, states need to accelerate their efforts to make good on the promises that have been made to survivors. We look forward to hearing more tangible progress when we meet again in June 2011 in Geneva.