

13th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Statement on Victim Assistance
3 December 2013



Thank you Mr/Ms Chair.

Records were set in 2012 for the lowest number of new reported casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war. The continued decline in new casualties indicates just how successful the Mine Ban Treaty is in fulfilling its vital promise of ending the casualties and suffering caused by these weapons. The average rate of people killed and injured last year by landmines and explosive remnants of war was 10 per day, compared to approximately 25 people each day when the Monitor started reporting in 1999.

Casualties were identified in 62 states and other areas in 2012, and unfortunately 20 of them are not yet party to the treaty. As in previous years, the vast majority of recorded casualties were civilians – nearly 80% of casualties were civilians, with the proportion of children and women increasing. The three States Parties that have regularly recorded the highest number of annual casualties over the past 14 years, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Colombia, all recorded decreases in casualties in 2012. The only State Party that registered a significant increase in casualties in 2012 was Yemen.

States Parties have made a commitment and a promise to assist all victims. More efforts to make assistance available and accessible to victims are reported each year. However, there are still many challenges, such as the continuing struggle to ensure adequate funding and other resources, and the need to uphold the rights of survivors in remote areas.

When it comes to planning and policies, assessments should determine the needs and capacities of all victims, including family members and affected communities. Governments, together with victims and service providers, can then determine what programs already exist to meet these needs and how victims can benefit from them. For example, landmine victims may require additional support in order to access services already available to other conflict victims, to displaced persons, or to low-income families in rural settings. Where no programs exist, gaps in fulfilling international obligations and national laws must be filled by creating new programs. This approach remains necessary in most countries. The role of victim assistance focal points within governments should include making sure that all victims are benefiting from any policies and programs that are relevant to them. This work must include close collaboration with national disability councils and all relevant ministries. Any national plan on victim assistance should also be appropriately linked with the national plan on disability.

Turning back to the subject of ensuring adequate funding and other resources for VA, what should happen? Assisting victims is a cross-cutting issue. In other words, victims should benefit on an equal basis with others from broader development, disability and human rights related initiatives. In addition,

funding earmarked for victim assistance should also continue to enable a response to the specific needs of victims.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a very significant tool for assisting survivors and other victims with disabilities. It promotes disability-inclusive development. Not a single development effort should be undertaken today that is not inclusive of the realities faced by persons with disabilities. From planning to evaluation, due diligence is required to ensure that non-discrimination of persons with disabilities, including survivors, becomes the norm.

But let's keep in mind that many victims, such as survivors' family members, are not persons with disabilities, so the CRPD is not a blanket solution. Also, the CRPD is only in its first years of implementation. Given the relatively slow pace by which states can bring about change within this framework, it does not provide an immediate alternative to dedicated victim assistance, though it certainly has great potential to do so in the future.

And so, when it comes to measuring whether victims are in fact being assisted through broader disability, development and human rights frameworks, the collection of disaggregated data will be vital to confirm victims are among the beneficiaries of these initiatives and benefit on an equal basis with others.

Reporting is key to ensuring a better global understanding of victim assistance. States can and should use voluntary Form J. However since Form J offers very little guidance, we would like to suggest that you follow the structure of Form H of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which provides very useful instructions on how to report progress and request support.

Thank you -- I will now pass the microphone to my colleague Umedjon Naimov from Tajkistan.

Umedjon:

Thank you. I would like to talk about the participation of victims. Most States Parties involve victims or their representative organizations in the coordination of victim assistance and broader efforts on disability issues. This is very good news. But there are many more steps that must be taken to ensure that victims are included in all activities related to the treaty, from planning, to implementation, to monitoring. Here are some suggestions on how to do so.

- States should help empower victims to participate in community life by fostering peer support, awareness of their rights, and orientation about existing opportunities.
- States should ensure that means exist to regularly share information with victims on developments related to victim assistance.

- States should hire qualified victims as civil servants, including in key positions where decisions on assistance are made. Awareness of the rights of victims and persons with disabilities in general should be raised among government authorities.
- States should support the efforts of victims who join together to seek solutions of their own at the community level through survivor networks and disabled people's organizations. This applies not only to affected states but to all those in a position to provide help.
- States should make victims a part of official delegations to meetings, and ensure they have a meaningful role.

Thank you.