

Check against delivery
Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
Intersessional meeting. Geneva, 8-9 June 2017
Statements by Belgium

On Victim Assistance

Mr President, Madam Chair,

As it is the first time I take the floor. Let me start by expressing the full **support of my delegation to Austria** during this Intersessional Meeting in order to prepare the 16th Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention.

I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the work done by all the Committees with the support of the ISU and the civil society. Preparing reports and observations, developing innovative approach and interactive communication between States Parties and all the stakeholders , taking stock of lessons learned, all this is fundamental to implement the Convention.

Belgium aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Representative of the European Union during the different segments of our Meeting and would like to add the following considerations in a national capacity.

Exactly 20 years ago, in June 1997, the **Declaration of Brussels** signed by 97 countries, outcome of an International Conference on anti-personnel landmines organized by my country, paved the way to the adoption of the **Convention signed in Ottawa** later that year.

We celebrate in 2017 the 20th anniversary of the Convention of Ottawa. More than never the moment has come to repeat our commitment for **a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025** but also a **world free of victims of anti-personnel mines**. More than never, we have to repeat our strong condemnation for any use of anti-personnel mines and improvised anti-personnel mines by anyone.

The Landmine Monitor 2016 reports an **increase of the number of people killed and injured**, in 2015, mostly civilians, **by mines, including by improvised anti-personnel mines**. Belgium remains gravely concerned about these data and about **the continued use of anti-personnel mines**.

We reaffirm our political commitment to the objectives of the Convention and supports mine clearance, mine risk education, advocacy and victim assistance

projects. In 2016, Belgium disbursed more than 2.500.000 € to these international cooperation and assistance projects. We will communicate on our financial contribution in 2017 when all the internal administrative procedures will be finalized.

Victim assistance, as a specific approach, taking also into account the gender perspective, is **integrated into policy planning and financial support of my country** . The new EU decision in support of the Maputo Action Plan will also take this approach into consideration.

Referring to the High level seminar on Victim Assistance organized during our Presidency and in the spirit of the Maputo +15 Declaration, we would like again to underline the importance *to address the needs of mine victims in a concrete manner with the aim of achieving their full, equal and effective participation in the society.*

Embedding assistance in a broader context of human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities remains essential. In the broader policy framework of other Conventions, such as the ones on cluster munitions and of explosives remnants of war, we have to build bridges to maximize assistance, at the service of the victim. We have to build bridges between policies providing assistance to victims of cluster munitions or landmines and policies providing assistance to people disabled through other causes.

The full and active participation of mine victims and their representative organizations is also required in all matters that affect them.

In line with the preparation of the 4th review Conference in 2019, my country continues to consider that victim assistance remains at the **heart of the efforts** of all the States Parties of the Convention, and will remain, more than ever, central in its future.