



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**  
**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT, VETERANS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

Geneva, Switzerland 24-27 June 2015

Statement on Assisting Mine Victim Survivors

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of all of its obligations under the Ottawa Convention including the victim assistance in accordance with the actions of the Maputo Action Plan and the preceding Cartagena Action Plan that still remains valid and under which Serbia has begun to develop Victim assistance coordination structures.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs is the competent authority in the Government of the Republic of Serbia in charge of ensuring protection, rights and financial support to disabled civilian veterans, family members of disabled civilian veterans and family members of civilian war victims.

This Ministry has been designated, from November 2012, as the focal point of victim assistance. Until 2012, the health aspect of these matters was dealt with by the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, War Veterans and Social Affairs initiated, in December 2013, the setting up of a Government Working Group tasked to deal with questions and problems relating to victims assistance, i.e. implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention).

On 15<sup>th</sup> of February The Government adopted the Decision on establishment of the Work group on application of the Ottawa Convention.

In line with the actions of the Maputo Action Plan-namely , actions to assess the needs of mine victims, the availability and gaps in services, requirements for disability, health education, employment, development and poverty reduction activities and with objectives to be realized through the implementation of national policies, plans and legal frameworks-tasks of the Working Group shall be as follows:

- Proposing measures to enhance the position of the victims of anti-personal mines;
- Proposing measures to enhance the legislative framework for the protection of the anti-personal mine victims;

- Monitoring alignment with the applicable legislation regulating the protection of the APM victims with international legislation and national law;
- Proposing special programmes and measures to promote and make the APM victims capable for public life;
- Cooperation with the association of the APM victims and civil society organizations involved in enhancement of the position of the APM victims;
- Cooperation with relevant institutions from abroad, international organizations and national working groups of the equivalent or similar profile with view to experience and good practice sharing;
- Monitoring progress regarding the provision of assistance to the APM victims within wider national plans and legal framework;
- Mapping all the existing services;

The Working Group are comprise representatives of this Ministry (Department for protection of veterans and the disabled; for protection of persons with disabilities; Employment Sector; Gender Equality Department), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Arms Control and Military Cooperation Section; International Humanitarian Law Commission), the Ministry of Health (Public Health Institute) , Ministry of Defence (Military Medical Academy), Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (Inclusive Education) and Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia. The Working Group have the necessary authorization and funds that would enable it to undertake all necessary actions for the benefit of the victims. Members of nongovernmental organizations are also expected to participate in the activities of the Working Group.

On the first meeting of the Working Group which was held on 29<sup>th</sup> of May members of the Working Group conclude that will certainly do everything in its power in order to support the actions ,under the relevant conventions, taken by experts in the areas of health, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, gender equality and mine victims. The members of Working group agreed that in the future there should be stronger coordination between victims and Government. It is further necessary to ensure more intensive media engagement, holding of a larger number of education sessions, conferences, and as soon as possible create a central database to include also the causes of injuries.

The purpose of setting up the Working Group for Victims Assistance was to enable monitoring of the progress made in providing assistance to victims within broader national plans and legal framework. It is also noted that the Republic of Serbia would consider very helpful and meaningful exchange of experiences and good practices with other states.

All municipalities in Serbia have services for the protection of veterans and the disabled that can be contacted by disabled civilian veterans for specific types of assistance. In remote rural areas, there are social protection services designed to extend quality assistance in the field of social welfare. It is noted that, as soon as the Working Group becomes operational, it will map out all the existing services.

The Serbian Government are financing NGO project activities (assistance) based on open tendering procedures. Through such activities, NGOs will organize training, education, aimed at promotion of men and women capacity building, and at improving the psychological and social situation of disabled war veterans, disabled civilian veterans, etc.

In the Republic of Serbia, the Strategy for promoting the status of persons with Disabilities 2007-2015 is in force. The Strategy recognized their equal rights with those of other disabled persons (the rights of disabled war veterans, peacetime disabled veterans, as well as civilian disabled veterans).

The Republic of Serbia is also implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Under the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of person with disabilities, the status of a person with disabilities is granted to disabled war veterans, peacetime disabled veterans and civilian disabled veterans. This Law is based on the principles governing the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, inclusion of all persons with disabilities, on an equal footing, in all spheres of social life – in accordance with their professional skills.

According to the Law, civilian disabled veterans are entitled to a number of benefits, not just one.

The Law regulating the rights of disabled civilian war veterans (“Official Gazette of R. Serbia”, No. 52 of 17 December 1996) envisages the following entitlements:

- 1.) personal disability allowance;
- 2.) allowance for care and assistance by another person;
- 3.) orthotics allowance;
- 4.) health care and financial benefits related to provision of health care;
- 5.) free and subsidized transport;
- 6.) food and accommodation benefits during travel and stay in places other than one’s place of residence, at the request of the relevant authority;
- 7.) monthly financial allowance;
- 8.) compensation for funeral expenses.

According to the information from the database of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans affairs and Social Policy, the number of civilian disabled veterans totals 1,316, out of which 921 men and 395 women. Their average age is 70 for men and 73 for women.

Civilian disabled veterans are disaggregated according to the degree of physical impairment. The rights of this category of people are stipulated by the Law regulating the rights of civilian disabled veterans, enforced from 1 January 1997. This Law ensures that the scope of protection envisaged for civilian disabled veterans is the same as for disabled war veterans whose rights are stipulated in other laws. In this way, the protection of civilian disabled veterans is raised to the highest possible level.

As soon as the Working Group is fully set up, effort will be made to complement the information and create a database to include also the causes of injuries.

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