

**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**  
**Informal Intersessional Meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**  
**(8-9 June)**

**Matters related to the mandate of the Committee on Victim Assistance**

Mr President<sup>1</sup>,

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprising several United Nations entities<sup>2</sup> involved in mine action.

The United Nations welcomes the report and preliminary observations of the Committee on Victim Assistance, as well as the updates by States Parties. The United Nations commends the measurable progress that has been achieved towards victim assistance in recent years, as marked by several positive trends:

- Improved monitoring and data collection, and documentation of victim assistance programmes;
- Continuing advocacy for the universalization and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities;
- The updated United Nations Victim Assistance Policy, and the development of UNICEF guidance document on Child-Focused Victim Assistance;
- Development of national policy frameworks and integrated Victim Assistance services into broader disability frameworks.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria

<sup>2</sup> The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) (Chair), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer), and the World Bank (Observer)

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In South Sudan, UNMAS helped the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare to develop a national policy for persons with disabilities. This landmark policy was launched in June 2016, enshrining the rights of people with disabilities, including victims of explosive hazards for the first time. In Cambodia, in 2016, 453 landmines/ERW child survivors received medical, vocational, and educational rehabilitation assistance, thanks to UNICEF support of local accredited community-based organizations.

While welcoming these results, the United Nations notes with concern that Victim Assistance remains an underfunded pillar of Mine Action. The 2017 United Nations mine action portfolio launched in February called for over \$30 million for projects aimed at improving victim assistance. Sadly, to date, only \$1 million was received. The lack of funding impacts the level of assistance that the United Nations can deliver. This is worrying considering that 6,451 mine/ERW casualties were recorded for 2015, marking a 75% increase globally<sup>3</sup>, and that casualty rates increased by at least a factor of six in the first six months of 2016, according to the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanism.

A remaining challenge for Victim Assistance programming is the collection of comprehensive data. While the collection of data on victims has improved, information sharing between all five mine action pillars is lacking. In addition, information on the actual implementation of victim assistance services is scarce, making it difficult to analyse the outcomes of VA initiatives.

The United Nations emphasises the link between victim assistance, economic recovery, and sustainable development. Providing assistance to victims of mines/ERW allows them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. The Victim Assistance pillar should thus be pursued in the medium/long-term development perspective to create the conditions conducive

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<sup>3</sup> International Campaign to Ban Landmines; <http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2386748/Landmine-Monitor-2016-web.pdf>; 6,461 casualties recorded in 2015 compared to 3,695 in 2014.

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for socio-economic reintegration and development. The United Nations calls on Member States to maximise the use of available resources to ensure the sustainability of comprehensive victim assistance programmes.

To conclude, the United Nations is calling upon States Parties to urgently provide the resources needed through the victim assistance appeal to improve the lives of survivors and victims of mines and ERW.

Thank you.