

**Intersessional Meetings
of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
7-8 June 2018**

Statements by the Kingdom of Belgium

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Madam President,

Belgium aligns itself with the statements delivered by the **European Union** and wishes to make the following remarks in her national capacity.

(victim assistance)

- Belgium would like to **thank all members** of the “Committee on Victim Assistance” Ambassador Batistic Kos from Croatia, Ambassador Comissario from Mozambique, and Ambassador Gallegos from Ecuador for their engagement in the work of the Committee this year. We look forward to pursue our good work during the second half of this year.
- Then, we’d like to **thank the ISU, as well as the ICBL and the ICRC** who are observers on the Committee, for their valued support to the committee’s work.
- My country also expresses its **deep appreciation to the States Parties that have submitted updated information** on their progress in implementing their victim assistance commitments under the Convention. Belgium also urges all States Parties that haven’t yet done so to submit their art. 7 **reports** as soon as possible, and to include in those reports relevant information on their victim assistance commitments.
- Belgium remains strongly **committed** to the Ottawa Convention, both politically and financially. Belgium was a pioneer in the fight against anti-personnel mines and our political engagement is still unwavering. By **chairing the Committee on Victim Assistance this year**, our aim is to advance victim assistance and to raise awareness on the importance of addressing the needs and guaranteeing the rights of mine victims.

- As a donor State, Belgium **integrates victim assistance**, as a **specific approach**, into the policy planning and financial support we deliver to demining projects.
- Belgium wishes to express her gratitude to her fellow-Committee members and to our partners who participated in the very first “**Victim Assistance Retreat**” in February. The retreat was the occasion to strengthen our cooperation with the victim assistance coordinators of the CCM and Protocol V of the CCW, and with the Committees on Cooperation and Assistance of both the CCM and APMBC with a view to better promote the needs and rights of mine victims. The retreat led to a roadmap for further cooperation.
- This year, the Committee focused on **building synergies with human rights**, disability and other relevant actors. We commend, in this regard, the Committee’s address to the CRPD and the WHO this year.
- Belgium also supports the organization of a “**VA Experts Gathering**” during the Meeting of States Parties in November as a useful means to foster the exchange of best practices between affected States and to reinforce the cooperation between affected States and the Committee.
- My country continues to **plead for the inclusion**, and the full, equal, and effective participation, of mine victims and their representative organizations in society through direct support and the integration of victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks.
- Belgium deems it important **to act together**, to enable the victims to become **actors of their own development** through the integration of victim **assistance** in the broader policy framework of our Convention, of other relevant conventions, but also in the context of the human rights and the sustainable development goals (**SDGs**). In the affected countries, mine action is key to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is up to mine affected countries to connect the Sustainable Developments Goals and their development strategies with mine action and make it a cross-cutting issue.
- **Gender mainstreaming** is another important horizontal priority in mine action. We thus positively welcome the attention granted by the Committee this year on **gender** and the **SDGs**. We also welcome the release by GMAP and the Victim Assistance

Coordinators of the CCM of new *“Operational Guidance for Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects”*.

- Finally, Belgium calls for **victim assistance to remain at the heart** of the Convention as a **core engagement** of all State Parties. Belgium urges all States Parties to step up their efforts to fulfill their obligations under the Convention ahead of the **Review Conference** next year.