



European Union

**EU Statement on Victim Assistance
Intersessional meetings
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 7-8 June 2018**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania* and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

We would like to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance for their presentation and preliminary observations regarding the implementation by States Parties of their victim assistance commitments. In particular, we would like to thank the Committee for actively seeking to reinforce cooperation and increase synergies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant human rights and disability actors and instruments.

We welcome the Victim Assistance Retreat that took place in February with the participation of Committees and coordinators from other relevant Conventions and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), and the agreement on a roadmap to facilitate cooperation across the Conventions. We also welcome the new Operational Guidance to make Victim Assistance more responsive to gender and diversity concerns, as prepared by the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) with Italian support, and presented at a side event on 7 June.

For the EU, victim assistance is a core component of our mine action policies. The once again increasing number of mine/Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) casualties, and recently also in anti-personnel mine (APM) casualties in particular, emphasises the need to urgently step up the national and international efforts on victim assistance. We agree that in order for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable in the long run, they need to be integrated into broader disability policies. The EU emphasises the importance that survivors participate in decision- and policy-making on issues affecting them and other spheres of society, on an equal basis and in a sustainable way.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The EU is actively supporting the efforts of States Parties to fulfil their victim assistance commitments of the Convention and the Maputo Action Plan. A specific project, funded under the 2017 EU Council Decision, will provide assistance to up to five States Parties to implement the victim assistance aspects of the Maputo Action Plan in a broader context of national policies on human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities. The project aims at empowering those who are injured by mines and indirect victims such as family members. The national stakeholder dialogues will incorporate gender and diversity aspects of victim assistance at the design, management and implementation levels. The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Ottawa Convention is also implementing this project and the Committee on Victim Assistance is involved in the selection of beneficiary partners. In the context of the same project, the ISU will organise in 2019 an international conference on victim assistance, as a follow-up to the EU-sponsored global conference that took place in Colombia in 2014 with the title "Building Bridges".

Finally, with 18 Article 7 reports received from 29 affected countries, we urge all States Parties to step up their efforts and fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations ahead of the 2019 Review Conference.