

**PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS
COMMITTEE ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE
(Belgium, Croatia, Ecuador, Mozambique)**

**Intersessional meetings
7-8 June 2018**

PART 1: Introduction

I. Activities of the Committee

1. On 23 January 2018, the Committee held its first meeting to discuss the Committee's work plan for the year. During the initial meeting the Committee identified three core priorities for 2018 including efforts to increase quality and quantity of reports by affected States, strengthen synergies with human rights and disability actors, and increase coherence between office holders and those addressing matters concerning Victim Assistance and Cooperation and Assistance within sister-Conventions. The Committee furthermore agreed to increase attention to gender and the Sustainable Development Goals as these are interlinked to victim assistance (*leaving no one behind*).
2. On 9 February 2018, the Committee Chair wrote individually to representatives of States Parties with mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control that had submitted updated information in 2017, and to those that had not, recalling *Maputo Action Plan commitments* and calling on States Parties to do their utmost to communicate relevant information by 30 April 2018. The Committee Chair noted in the letter the importance of transmitting information in a timely manner. The Committee Chair also requested States Parties to provide information on progress and challenges and welcomed States to provide additional information on how these take gender and Sustainable Development Goals into account when implementing their victim assistance commitments.
3. In a communication to States Parties, the Committee Chair reiterated that the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), which is mandated to provide advice and technical support to States Parties on implementation of the Convention, remained ready to support their efforts in fulfilling their *Maputo Action Plan* reporting commitments. The Committee sent letters to all 29 States Parties with significant number of mine victims, including those that do not have a Permanent Mission in Geneva.
4. On 22 February 2018, the Committee held a Victim Assistance retreat to increase synergies and cooperation with relevant parties including the Victim Assistance Coordinators of the Cluster Munitions Convention and Protocol V of the Convention on Conventional Weapons, as well as with the Committees on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Cluster Munitions Convention. The retreat provided an opportunity to share plans and objectives for 2018, discuss respective thematic priorities, promote common understanding of respective actions, objectives and mandates, evaluate concrete opportunities for cooperation, and build a concerted victim assistance approach to support the promotion of common objectives. All participants saw this as a useful endeavour and agreed to continue and increase their interaction.
5. On 14 May 2018, the Committee convened a Briefing for States Parties with mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control. In line with the Committee's mandate, in part, to "provide advice and support in a cooperative manner to States Parties in the fulfilment of their commitments under the *Maputo Action Plan*", the Committee used the opportunity to review

commitments contained in Actions #13 - #18, offering its advice and support.

6. In implementing its mandate to, in part, raise awareness, in relevant fora, of the importance of addressing the needs and guaranteeing the rights of mine victims in broader domains the Committee carried out the following actions:
 - a. On 14 February 2018, the Committee addressed the opening of the 19th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in which it stressed the link between the work of the Committee and that of the CRPD.
 - b. On 19 February 2018, the Committee addressed a closed session of the Committee of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to discuss possible ways to reinforce cooperation between both Committees. Both agreed to exchange information (VAC conclusions) and to seek further cooperation opportunities.
 - c. On 25 May 2018, the Chair addressed the World Health Assembly on behalf of the Committee to support the adoption by the WHO of the resolution on *Improving Access to Assistive Technology* and highlight the importance of this initiative in providing support to mine victims.

II. Methodology

7. In line with its mandate to support States Parties in their national efforts to strengthen and advance victim assistance, and continuing the work it had undertaken in 2017, the Committee gave particular attention to efforts by States Parties with mine victims to report on the following aspects of the *Maputo Action Plan*:
 - Assessment of mine victims' needs, availability and gaps in services and support, and existing or new requirements for disability, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction activities needed to meet the needs of mine victims; and to refer victims to existing services where possible.
 - Time-bound and measurable objectives for the equal and effective participation of mine victims in society.
 - Enhancement to plans, policies and legal frameworks to meet the needs of mine victim and on budgets allocated for their implementation.
 - Enhancement of coordination with subnational entities and increased availability of and accessibility to appropriate comprehensive rehabilitation, economic inclusion opportunities and social protection measures for all mine victims.
 - Enhancement of the capacity to ensure the inclusion and active participation of mine victims and their representative organisations in national action plans, legal frameworks, policies, implementation mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation.
8. In preparing its preliminary observations the Committee drew upon information submitted by States Parties in their Article 7 reports. Additionally the Committee drew from information provided by States Parties directly to the Committee.
9. The Committee also attached attention to the information provided by States Parties with mine victims on the way they take into account gender and the sustainable development goals in the implementation of their victim assistance obligations.

III. Information provided by States Parties on victim assistance

10. At the close of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties, 29 States Parties had reported significant numbers of mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control. Of these, as of 15 May 2018, eighteen (18) submitted Article 7 reports: Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Jordan, Mozambique, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand and Zimbabwe.
11. Of these States, 16 had submitted updated information on victim assistance activities in their Article 7 reports: Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Jordan, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand and Zimbabwe.
12. Of these, one State Party – Sudan – submitted additional reports on victim assistance to the Committee.
13. One State Party – Burundi – did not submit an Article 7 report but submitted information on victim assistance efforts directly to the Committee.
14. Of the 29 States Parties that have reported significant numbers of mine victims in areas under their jurisdiction or control, at the time of writing, 12 had not submitted updated information on efforts to implement Victim Assistance commitments: Angola, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Somalia, Tajikistan, Uganda and Yemen.

PART 2: OBSERVATIONS

I. Observations of a general nature

15. The Committee is grateful for the information submitted on progress in implementation of victim assistance commitments by Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Jordan, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand and Zimbabwe.
16. While the number of reports submitted has slightly dropped by one report as compared to last year; there has been a general improvement in the quality of the information submitted by States Parties which demonstrates a stronger engagement in the work of the Committee. We encourage these States to continue providing high quality information concerning implementation of the *Maputo Action Plan*; the Committee looks forward to continued engagement throughout the year.
17. The Committee observed that casualties continue to be reported by States Parties and that in some cases the number of casualties has increased due to the use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature. The Committee observed the importance of States Parties continuing to report on casualties in a sex and age disaggregated fashion as well as providing geographically-specific information on the location of casualties.
18. The Committee would welcome additional information on the systems in place and activities carried out to assess the needs of mine victims, the availability and gaps in services and support, and existing or new requirements for disability, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction activities needed to meet the needs of mine victims, and to refer victims to existing services where possible in accordance with Action 12 of the *Maputo Action Plan*.

19. The Committee observed that while a number of States had reported having developed strategies and national action plans on disability and victim assistance, few States Parties had reported on time-bound and measurable objectives they seek to achieve through the implementation of national policies, plans and legal frameworks that will tangibly contribute to the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society in accordance with Action 13 of the *Maputo Action Plan*. The Committee encourages States Parties to communicate, on these efforts including through their annual transparency reports. The Committee further encourages States Parties to provide a copy of their National Victim Assistance/Disability Strategies and Plan to the Committee.
20. The Committee would welcome additional information from States Parties on activities undertaken to ensure the inclusion, full and active participation of mine victims and their representative organisations in all matters that affect them, particularly as concerns national action plans, legal frameworks, policies, implementation mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation in accordance with Action 16 of the *Maputo Action Plan*.
21. The Committee observed that as the Convention nears the Fourth Review Conference it would welcome additional information from States Parties on measurable improvements made in the well-being and the guarantee of rights of mine victims, challenges that remain and priorities for assistance. In this regard, the Committee welcomes information provided by States on challenges they faced in implementing their victim assistance commitments. The Committee observed that providing this information is of particular importance in order for the Committee to better assist States Parties in making their needs known and supporting their implementation efforts. The Committee further observed that States Parties would benefit from reaching out to the Committee and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit for guidance in the implementation of their Victim Assistance reporting commitments.
22. The Committee observed that most of the reports provided information disaggregated by sex and age, especially concerning casualties. The Committee would welcome increased information on policies and programmes to improve gender equality among mine victims and would invite States Parties to report on efforts undertaken in the implementation of all pillars of victim assistance, including in remote and rural areas, to improve gender equality. The Committee would also welcome increased information on how States take gender and the Sustainable Development Goals into account in the implementation of their victim assistance commitments.
23. The Committee noted that resources and funding for victim assistance efforts remains a significant challenge for States Parties in implementing their victim assistance efforts. In this regard the Committee encourages States in need of assistance to consider participating in the Convention's "individualised approach" led by the Committee on the enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance gathering States and organizations in a position to provide support.
24. The Committee observed the importance of engagement of health, human rights, disability and development actors to address the needs of victims in an efficient, effective and sustainable fashion; as well as the importance of cooperation between disarmament instruments which have victim assistance responsibilities to ensure that the different actors understand their specific role, highlight mutually beneficial opportunities and ensure that activities are mutually reinforcing.

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE 29 STATES PARTIES THAT HAVE INDICATED HAVING A RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF LANDMINE SURVIVORS

State Party	Article 7 report submitted in 2017 ¹	Information on victim assistance contained in the Article 7 report	Information on Maputo Action Plan victim assistance commitments provided in the Article 7 report	Information on Maputo Action Plan victim assistance commitments provided through means other than the Article 7 report
Afghanistan	✓	✓	✓	
Albania	✓	✓	✓	
Angola				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	✓	✓		
Burundi				✓
Cambodia	✓	✓	✓	
Chad	✓	✓		
Colombia	✓	✓	✓	
Croatia	✓	✓	✓	
DR Congo	✓	✓	✓	
El Salvador				
Eritrea				
Ethiopia				
Guinea-Bissau				
Iraq	✓	✓	✓	
Jordan	✓	✓	✓	
Mozambique	✓			
Nicaragua				
Peru	✓			
Senegal	✓	✓	✓	
Serbia	✓	✓	✓	
Somalia				
South Sudan	✓	✓	✓	
Sudan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tajikistan				
Thailand	✓	✓	✓	
Uganda				
Yemen				
Zimbabwe	✓	✓	✓	

¹ Status by 15 May, 2018

STATUS OF 2017 REPORTING BY THE 29 STATES PARTIES THAT HAVE INDICATED HAVING A RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF LANDMINE SURVIVORS, IN LINE WITH THE MAPUTO ACTION PLAN

State Party	Action 12	Action 13	Action 14	Action 15	Action 16	Action 17	Action 18
Afghanistan	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Albania	✓	✓		✓			
Angola							
Bosnia and Herzegovina	✓			✓			
Burundi	✓						✓
Cambodia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Chad	✓			✓	✓		
Colombia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Croatia	✓		✓	✓			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
El Salvador							
Eritrea							
Ethiopia							
Guinea Bissau							
Iraq				✓			
Jordan		✓	✓	✓			
Mozambique							
Nicaragua							
Peru							
Senegal	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Serbia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Somalia							
South Sudan	✓						✓
Sudan		✓		✓		✓	✓
Tajikistan							
Thailand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Uganda							
Yemen							
Zimbabwe	✓			✓			