

Norwegian statement

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

22 June 2011

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Thank you Chair,

Victim assistance rests on two key principles: the *inclusion* of victims and people with disability on a *non-discriminatory* basis.

The Mine Ban Convention has created and promoted an international understanding that victim assistance is an issue of human rights, and established a firm expectation that states involve and consult with victims and survivors. A holistic, integrated and non-discriminatory approach to victim assistance is the only way to make sufficient progress in the implementation of the Convention. We have to continue providing assistance to victims that does not only consist of physical rehabilitation and psychological support, but also ensures social and economic inclusion for all. Inclusion of victims and survivors is key to ensure that assistance programmes and services are best tailored to address the needs of victims. In addition, inclusion is also an obligation based on a core human right to participate in decision-making affecting one's own life.

The last decade's victim assistance has evolved from focusing on physical rehabilitation of war victims to focusing on the inclusion of *all* persons with disabilities in all phases and areas of assistance, a development that is important to highlight. Through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, victim assistance has been strengthened and made even more visible, making the three Conventions mutually reinforcing.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has given us the opportunity to mainstream our approach to victim assistance in our development aid, while at the same time there is still a need to continue with specific projects supporting small scale activities of victim assistance within the framework of this convention – the so called twin track approach. We also need to keep in mind the importance of national ownership and national capacity building to ensure sustainability at a sufficient level, and by that fulfilling the objective of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in securing the inclusion of victims and people with disabilities on a non-discriminatory basis. This can only be achieved by a holistic approach by all relevant actors and strong national coordination.

Actions 23 - 33 of the Cartagena Action Plan provide clear principles on how we can obtain full inclusion of victims of landmines and persons with disabilities. Moreover, they correspond to human rights provisions in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This brings me to another key issue, namely our obligation to not exclude people with disabilities on the *basis of their disability*, nor the *cause of it*. The inclusive and non-discriminatory approach must be enhanced and improved.

In the end of May, representatives from Governments, humanitarian organizations and civil society were gathered in Oslo for a conference on *Disability in Conflicts and Emergencies*. This conference was the first of its kind, and provided a unique opportunity to share experiences and possibilities on how to include persons with disabilities at all levels and responses to humanitarian emergencies. We have distributed/will distribute the Chair's Summary to all participants here in the Standing Committee.

Discussions at the conference showed that exclusion and discrimination of people with disabilities in emergencies is largely due to exclusionary policies and practices, inaccessible planning and lack of participation. This only underlines the importance of a strong civil society, and that persons with disabilities must be empowered to advocate for their own legal rights and included in all stages of planning, mapping and implementation. Norway supports peer support programs in order for victims to advocate changes to laws and policies around the world and provide assistance to other victims.

We are all responsible for keeping victim assistance a high priority. We have the guidelines and the tools, now we have to continue to take action and include *all* persons with disabilities in doing so.

Thank you.

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