

Mine Ban Convention  
Standing Committee on Victim Assistance  
Norwegian intervention on Victim Assistance  
3 June 2008

Mr. Chair

Assistance to mine survivors is one of the most important areas of the Mine Ban Convention..

In accordance with the Mine Ban Convention, the main responsibility for assisting mine survivors lies with the national authorities, but also other state parties have obligations towards mine survivors. The only way to secure good and long term programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration of people with disabilities, including mine survivors, is to integrate these programmes into national general health, social services and vocational training systems, as well as other human rights frameworks. Mine survivors and their organisations have to be involved in making these plans.

We know that there is a risk that such programmes may disappear in the discussion on the use of scarce resources in a situation with a lot of needs. We, both mine-affected governments and donor governments, must ensure that assistance to mine survivors does not disappear or be given low priority when development priorities are being made.

Norway will continue to put physical, psycho-social and socioeconomic **reintegration** of mine survivors and other people with disabilities in society on the agenda in our discussion with partners. Norway's direct support to mine survivors will be channelled through NGOs, the victims' own organisations such as The Landmine Survivors Network, through the Red Cross Movement and the UN system. Through bilateral development cooperation programmes in sectors as education, health, micro-financing and others, we also reach out to these target groups. We also have earmarked support to the ISUs Victim Assistance work

With some States Parties nearing completion of mine clearance activities, it is essential that relevant ministries are aware that their State's obligations to address the rights and needs of mine survivors go beyond the time limit for mine clearance. State responsibility for mine survivors will not end in 2009. All States Parties must remain committed to the victim assistance issue to ensure the long-term sustainability of actions. The Second Review Conference will be an important venue for relevant States Parties to provide more information on the current status of services available to persons with disabilities, including mine survivors.

In 2005, Norway and Nicaragua, as Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance, recognised the need to increase efforts to support concrete progress in meeting the needs of landmine victims before the Second Review Conference. With this goal we prepared a questionnaire to assist relevant State Parties in preparing victim assistance objectives. The questionnaire has been further developed over the last two years. By using this tool, SMART objectives and by implementing plans of actions, progress is being made in many of the relevant States Parties. We would also like to commend the current and previous Co-Chairs of this Committee for the way in which they have succeeded in engaging participating victim assistance experts, and for cooperating with the ISU in further improving the process of assisting States Parties with significant numbers of victims in developing victim assistance objectives.

Since the Mine Ban Convention was drafted and adopted more than ten years ago, our understanding of victim assistance has developed. We have learned a lot, for instance about the importance of active inclusion of survivors in planning and implementing assistance; the involvement of survivors' families and communities; the importance of integrating victim assistance into existing health care structures, and the recognition of the value of a right-based approach. The Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has now entered into force, can provide guidance to State Parties on how to amend laws and policies relating to persons with disabilities to reflect such a right-based approach. This development of our thinking has also been reflected in the Convention on Cluster Munitions which was negotiated and adopted in Dublin last week. In this Convention, the definition of a cluster munition victim includes affected families and communities, and the separate article on victim assistance reflects the importance of a gender-sensitive, inclusive, integrated and non-discriminatory approach. We believe and hope that there will be synergies between these three conventions that will empower the 650 million persons with disabilities in the world.

At the same time we know that the obligations in the Mine Ban Convention, fortified by the Convention for the rights of Person with Disabilities and also by the Convention on Cluster Munitions, bring challenges, both of a practical and administrative character. There is a need for capacity building of staff at all levels in the bureaucracy as well as in the social and educational sector. This must be given priority. In these efforts, the competence and expertise in the civil society both at the national and local level, should be drawn upon. Experience shows that there is a lot to achieve with better cooperation, coordination and information sharing between the different actors at local and national level. Norway supports a number of programmes which is implemented by the NGOs within the umbrella organisation for the development work of disabled organisations in Norway.

Mr. Chair,

Mine survivors are men and women, children and elderly. Norway would like to stress the importance of including gender and age sensitivity in mine survivor's assistance. As of gender, there is an increasing awareness and knowledge of the variety of challenges that women are exposed to - as mine survivors; or as mothers, wives or relatives of people killed or injured by mines. In addition, they may be the local capacity in basic health supply, in education and children's' up-bringing and in general awareness work. Norway is convinced that a gender-sensitive approach in victim assistance will enhance both effectiveness and efficiency.

Thank you.