

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

26 May 2009

Statement by Norway

Check against delivery

Mr. /Madame Chair,

Second Review Conference

Norway will as President-Designate of the Second Review Conference, focus on compliance with the obligations in the Mine Ban Convention and its core humanitarian objectives. The basis will be the realities in the field, and survivors and victim assistance shall be at the forefront.

Colombia, as the host country shares this commitment and has already started preparing events in Cartagena that will bring survivors and victim assistance also to a wider audience than our Mine Ban Convention community. A recent retreat on Victim assistance here in Geneva with States Parties, NGOs and multilateral organizations discussed, among other issues, how the focus on survivors could be reflected in the Cartagena Action Plan that will set the agenda for the progress to be made in the next five years. We want the new Action Plan to be focussed and action oriented, with clear indicators to measure progress and achievement of goals and to assure that political and financial support is secured.

Victim Assistance

It is a **human right for a mine-survivor** to receive assistance and to be included into society. These rights cover medical, economical, legal and psychosocial assistance. Everybody must have access to their human rights, and this demands gender-sensitive efforts in all areas of mine action, including victim assistance. It is essential to understand how gender affects people's access to assistance, the importance of gender-sensitive and age-appropriate assistance, and how assistance efforts actually affect the lives of women and men in different ways.

Governments have the obligation to provide such assistance, local authorities have to take their share of the responsibility and according to the Mine Ban Convention, States Parties who "are in a position to do so, shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation as well as economic and social reintegration of mine victims and for mine awareness programs." Survivors have different needs for assistance, also changing over time. The conditions and possibilities in the home countries of the victims are of course also different, as are the communities of the victims, something today's discussions have shown.

Victim assistance is a key feature of the Convention, but still often remains low on priorities for mine action. It should not be like this - the needs of the survivors and their experiences must be emphasized when priorities are set. Survivors provide insights complimentary to those expressed

by States Parties in their reporting in accordance with the Convention, and they should therefore take part in planning and implementation of victim assistance programmes.

Norway will maintain a high level of assistance and to continue to work on developing partnership initiatives. We will continue to support and cooperate with States Parties, UN and ICRC as well as NGOs in the work to implement the Convention.

The way forward

The Second Review Conference will take stock of progress made since 2004. The voices of those directly affected, victims, their families and communities must be heard – how have their experiences been, has the progress that should be anticipated taken place? It is the experiences from the field that is essential, are victims really re-integrated in the society?

In Cartagena we must ensure that victims and survivors take a lead when we plan for the next five years. This is the only way we can identify the relevant and measurable targets.

Coherence

International law has developed and progressed since the adoption of the Mine Ban Convention almost twelve years ago. Since then two new international instruments have moved our understanding of victim and survivor assistance forward. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities assists us in keeping a rights-based, inclusive and non-discriminatory approach, while the Convention on Cluster Munitions has provided victim assistance a more prominent place, with stronger obligations and a broader definition of victims

These developments reflect lessons learned in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. The existence of different legal frameworks should be seen as an opportunity, rather than an obstacle to do victim assistance in an even better way. How and to what extent it is possible to streamline implementation and monitoring between the conventions is to be seen, as they are at different phases yet.

Thank you.