



Statement on Victim Assistance

11th Meeting of States Parties, Mine Ban Treaty

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

29 November 2011

Good afternoon Excellencies, delegates and colleagues.

My name is Bekele Gonfa Oba and I am a landmine survivor from Ethiopia. Two years ago myself and many survivors and other victim assistance experts, including both campaigners and government delegates, provided extensive input into the Cartagena Action Plan, a document that has guided our collective implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

As a survivor, I see great value in its focus on improving access to services for all survivors, including those living in rural and remote areas, and on victim assistance as a means to promote the human rights of all survivors.

As we meet here, in Cambodia two years after the Second Review Conference in Colombia, we can say that there has been some progress in turning the vital promises of the Cartagena Action Plan into reality. We have seen the gap between words and action narrow. However, progress on the ground has been slow; the impact on the lives of survivors even slower. Real change has occurred in far too few countries. With just three years left to fulfill the commitments of Cartagena Action Plan, it is time to step up the action, to push harder, to make more progress.

Following the plan has been made simple. Recommendations were presented by the victim assistance co-chairs in 2009. Some focused on increasing access to appropriate services, ranging from making buildings accessible, to developing a service directory and referral system, to making transportation and housing available to survivors seeking services.

- We can identify only three States parties that have passed laws or guidelines to increase accessibility to public spaces. If your state has not done this, push for progress in accessibility now.
- We can identify only five States Parties that have made efforts so that survivors and communities in rural areas can better access services. If your state has not acted to reach survivors in remote places, work in your country to push for progress now.
- Service directories have been produced Colombia, Croatia and Uganda to help survivors locate services. All states with survivors can take such a simple measure to improve accessibility.

I will now pass the microphone on to my colleague Margaret Arach Orech who will present the rest of our remarks.

Most mine survivors live in countries and regions with high levels of poverty. In some countries, the normal services of victim assistance are disrupted by new or ongoing conflicts. All states need to improve access to services. Information on what to do, and how to do it, is shared in the parallel program and is available from ICBL victim assistance focal points and campaigners. We call on you to plan and budget for activities to ensure that all survivors, including those in remote areas, can access services. Share those plans in this forum. Ask for the help you need, such as additional funding or expertise.

Victim assistance is an obligation and it is a right of all survivors. States Parties must develop, review and modify relevant laws and policies and make them work for survivors. Co-chairs rightly recommended that States Parties join the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It can guide implementation of the victim assistance actions of the Cartagena Plan. Over half of the States Parties with significant numbers of survivors have ratified the CRPD, four of these since Cartagena. But in the last two years, just a few states including Ethiopia, Mozambique and Thailand, have shown that steps taken to implement the CRPD have the potential to specifically benefit landmine survivors.

A number of significantly affected countries, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia and Iraq, are still in the process of ratifying the CRPD. Listen to survivors and the advice of the co-chairs; ratify the CRPD now! Use the CRPD as a framework in meeting your obligations to mine survivors. Like the Cartagena Action Plan it takes a rights-based approach to provide appropriate services to women, men, boys, and girls.

Include survivors in all areas of victim assistance. Make participation real by giving meaningful responsibility to survivors. The best expert often is a survivor. Give survivors a role on delegations. Have survivors mere participation in coordination efforts or on delegations expand to decision-making roles as well.

Time is passing quickly; five years has become three. Victim assistance is a long-term commitment. But 2014 is a deadline for delivering action, a deadline that will not be met through words alone. Progress can only be measured by the impact in the lives of survivors. Step up your efforts to protect and promote the rights of survivors and ensure access to appropriate services. Push ahead with the Cartagena Action Plan in order to see positive changes in the lives of survivors.

This is your commitment and this is our expectation.

Thank you.