

**STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE 11TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE AP MINE BAN CONVENTION, 28 NOVEMBER TO 2 DECEMBER 2011**

**VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

Mr President

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Cambodian Government for the invitation and presiding over the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the AP Mine Ban Convention. We would also like to thank you for your warm hospitality extended to my delegation in this beautiful city of Phnom Penh. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr President

South Africa continues to attach great importance to the AP Mine Ban Convention. In this regard, we welcome the opportunity to exchange views and perspectives on progress and challenges that remain in our quest for a world free of AP landmines.

Mr President

The AP Mine Ban Convention is one of the milestones in International Humanitarian Law. It is in this context that we've always put emphasis on assisting victims and survivors of mines and other explosive remnants of war. Even though there has been a significant decrease in the use of mines, there are disturbing reports that some countries and a number of non-state actors continue to use them putting the lives of innocent people at risk. The continued existence and use of mines often result into killings and maiming of innocent civilians.

Mr President

We fully share the sentiments expressed by the UN United Nations Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon during the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, when he said:

*"Without proper support, survivors of landmines and explosive remnants of war may face a lifetime of poverty and discrimination, lacking adequate health care or rehabilitation services. Member States, civil society and the United Nations must strive to foster the legislative, social and economic conditions that enable survivors to realize their rights and be productive members of society."*

Mr President

It is in this regard that South Africa wishes to emphasise that victim assistance is not only limited to immediate medical care, but that we view education, vocational training and the socio-economic reintegration as the key in ensuring that victims lead normal lives. In addition, victims should be able to have full access to health, education and services based on their needs. We wish to underscore that the care for victims should a long-term undertaking by the States.

Mr President

South Africa will continue to play its role in advancing the aims of the AP Landmine Convention. We, as a collective, need to redouble our efforts towards the elimination of these weapons that continue to cause unacceptable harm to innocent civilians. It is our hope that despite the remaining challenges, we will continue to work together in a spirit of co-operation that has been a salient feature of our Convention. With the necessary assistance and co-operation, my delegation believes that we will be able to overcome obstacles towards achieving our goal of a world free from the scourge of anti-personnel mines.

I thank you.