



Agenda item 10 (a)
Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention
Assisting the victims

Tuesday 29 November

The United Nations Mine Action Team joins States Parties for the focus in addressing the needs of landmines and ERW victims, including in relation to assistance and prioritisation.

We all know the challenges that remain. The Phnom Penh progress report notes the persistent difficulties in translating increased dialogue on victim assistance into tangible improvements in the quality of daily life of mine victims.

The Landmine Monitor reports a record level of funding and clearance activities in 2010, yet a relatively static year for funding and service provision to survivors, at approximately 9% of all funding in spite of an increasing number of survivors. And children continue to constitute almost half of civilian victims, as they have for the last four years. Not only is this tragic in terms of their personal lives, but it reminds us that support for survivors must be a long-term commitment as they will require continued support, specific to their age as they make their way to adulthood.

The United Nations Mine Action Team acknowledges the complementarity of mine action with other sectors charged with the responsibility for public health and the well-being of disabled survivors and promotes the integration into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to disability, health, education, poverty reduction, development and also employment. The full spectrum of support to survivors is required.

However this is not to say that in cases where victim assistance and/or disability programmatic efforts are linked to mine action programmes that these efforts should be discontinued, nor that this integration does not come with its own challenges. In order to ensure that landmine and ERW victims receive appropriate access to services and assistance, this link to mine action in fact should be maintained unless there is a means of integrating victim assistance into broader national frameworks, supported by adequate resources. This must be our simultaneous priority in addition to direct victim assistance programming

Let's look, for example, at a case in Afghanistan to illustrate these challenges. Victim assistance, through the lens of disability, has transitioned to complete Government ownership in Afghanistan,

spread across three key ministries and with some services still provided by NGOs and technical advisors, including those provided by UNMAS. The UN Afghanistan Disability Support Programme (ADSP) was established in April 2011, through the support of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), to encourage an integrated approach to the issue of disability amongst Afghan and international partners and remove the issue from a strictly mine action-oriented lens.

UNMAS met with UN and other partners through the year to identify an organisation, outside of a mine action context, to form a close association to the ADSP and assume primary responsibility to support to the government's work on disability. No further support was identified to sustain this integrated approach in the long-term and the ADSP therefore will wind down its activities in early 2012. Victim assistance and relevant support to national capacity will once again return to be a component of MACCA's work.

Therefore, the adoption of a twin-track approach, as advocated by the ICBL and the ICRC, is required. This twin-track approach would combine strategies aiming at mainstreaming disability as a crosscutting issue in all aspects of programming with specific, along with specialized interventions and programmes in support of mine and ERW victims.

Mine action programmes, including those managed or supported by the United Nations, could, at minimum, supplement the efforts of national sector leadership with age and sex disaggregated data on victims as well as support national coordination and advocacy efforts so that victim assistance is placed at the highest possible level within national institutions.

As most mine and ERW victims would require life-long support services, victim assistance remains a long-term commitment requiring sustained support reflected in political, social and financial terms, and where international, regional and bilateral cooperation and assistance could provide the supplementary support needed.

We welcome the parallel programmes for victim assistance during Intersessionals and Meetings of States Parties and support the discussions on victim assistance continued during plenary sessions. Victim assistance remains relevant not only to disability experts at the national level, but to the whole international community represented here at the 11MSP.

Last, the United Nations Mine Action Team continues to encourage States Parties to use the framework provided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to facilitate the full enjoyment by mine and ERW victims of their human rights. The World Report on Disability, launched earlier this year by the World Health Organization and the World Bank 2011, is an important tool to assist in improving the delivery and the quality of a

number of services associated with victim assistance, such as data gathering, emergency medical care, psychological support –including peer support- and physical rehabilitation.

Thank you