

**ICRC statement on Victim Assistance,
13th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 4 December 2013**

As we heard in the ICRC Vice-President's speech during the opening ceremony, anti-personnel landmines still pose a threat in many countries and individuals, like Salih Hasanamidzic, continue to be injured or killed by these weapons. While the number of new victims has dramatically decreased since the entry in force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, new victims continued to add to the total number of people for whom lifelong assistance is usually required.

On the positive side, an increased number of affected countries have improved access to necessary services for survivors; an increased number of survivors had and continue to have access to assistance, and the concept and the importance of Victim Assistance is now well understood. The ICRC, through the physical rehabilitation support that we provide in most affected countries, has witnessed over the years an overall improvement in most of these countries. Not always at the same level, not always with the same success, but nevertheless, improvement is there. However, the ICRC is also aware that much needs to be done to ensure that services which are available at present continue to be available in the long-term.

The ICRC agrees that to ensure sustainability, Victim Assistance needs to be mainstreamed into national health and social systems and integrated into development plans. However, we also believe that this Convention, along with the CCW Protocol V on explosive remnants of war and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), has a strong role to play in addressing the needs of victims, survivors and other persons with disabilities. It is not because Victim Assistance is linked to the development of the country that the APMBC community should not continue to support Victim Assistance efforts, both by national authorities and supporting organizations like the ICRC.

We nevertheless believe that the way Victim Assistance is addressed within the framework of this Convention and within those of the CCW Protocol V and CCM should be reviewed and adapted to create a new momentum and to achieve concrete and significant results in the coming years.

First, we believe it is time to address Victim Assistance with a more global approach as there is a significant potential for synergies in the implementation of victim assistance for weapons victims under different international instruments, both at the national and international level. The objective of promoting a global approach is to maximize the impact of victim assistance efforts beyond what can be achieved under each treaty – i.e. ensure that the “outcome is greater than the sum of each part”.

Second, States Parties should continue to formally report on their Victim Assistance efforts during States Parties Meetings and, if possible, also in their annual transparency reports. Such reporting would be most productive if States report concretely on progress and/or difficulties in implementing their national Plans of Action on Victim Assistance.

Third, to complement discussions during the formal meetings, we strongly believe that discussions on Victim Assistance should be brought closer to the reality of the affected states by holding national and/or regional meetings. Consistent with this recommendation, from 4 – 6 March 2014, the ICRC will organize in collaboration with the African Union an African workshop on Victim Assistance in Addis Ababa.

Fourth, we also believe that the organisation of the Standing Committee of Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration should be revised. The Standing Committee could be broadened to include representatives from affected States, donor States, supporting organizations such as the ICRC and ICBL. It could serve in the preparation of documents for validation by the States Parties, and guide the work on victim assistance in the coming years.

To conclude, while many improvements have been achieved in regards to Victim Assistance, we should not forget that work still needs to be done to achieve the promises of the Convention. Over the years, the ICRC has shown its commitment to support Victim Assistance efforts at national and international level. We have also shown our commitment to ensuring that survivors have access to physical rehabilitation, which remains an important pillar of victim assistance, as restoring mobility is the first step towards enjoying such basic rights as access to food, shelter and education, finding a job and earning an income and, more generally, having the same opportunities as other members of society.

The ICRC will continue its support, both in States Parties and in States not party to the Convention, to ensure that survivors and their families have access to appropriate services. We will also continue supporting the development of national capacities in the provision of appropriate services to persons with disabilities, including survivors of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

We hope and trust that States Parties will also continue and expand their efforts to address the needs of survivors, and affected families and communities.