

STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE 13TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE AP MINE BAN CONVENTION, 2 TO 5 DECEMBER 2013

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

(Check against delivery)

Mr President

At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the Thirteen Meeting of States Parties (13MSP) to the AP Mine Ban Convention. We have no doubt that with your able leadership, you will steer us to a successful conclusion of the 13MSP. I therefore, would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr President

It's been more than two decades since the campaign to ban landmines gathered its full steam. This campaign would probably would not be that successful if it were not for the tireless efforts of the victims who became the faces of the campaign through their inspiring and touching stories about how their lives changed after they were injured/maimed by these indiscriminate weapons.

It is this reason that my delegation, has always argued that the implementation of the Convention should focus on assisting the victims and putting measures in place to make sure that there are no more victims of landmines. Since the adoption of this Convention in 1997, the number of mine victims has dropped significantly, but sadly thousands of people are still killed or maimed in mine accidents every year. Therefore, my delegation is concerned about the alleged use of landmines in some countries, as this will further increase the number of mine victims.

Mr President

Mine victims still face a number of challenges which include among others; inadequate medical emergency and ongoing medical care services, lack of accessibility to some victims especially those in remote areas, lack of physical and psychosocial support, discrimination in job market and others. In addressing these challenges, more resources should be put in place to expand the victim assistance programmes. Secondly, mine risk education should be undertaken to significantly reduce the number of mine accidents especially among children. Thirdly, 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 be a long-term undertaking by the States. Last but not least, the international community should continue to stigmatise the use of landmines by some countries and a number of non-state actors, which put the lives of innocent people at risk.

Mr President

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

Landmines are cruel instruments of war. Decades after conflicts have receded, these invisible killers lie silently in the ground, waiting to murder and maim. Through them, twentieth century battles claim twenty-first century victims, with new casualties added every hour. A single landmine -- or even the fear of its presence -- can hold an entire community hostage. It can prevent farmers from growing crops, refugees from returning home, even children from playing. It blocks the delivery of humanitarian relief and impedes the deployment of peacekeepers. In post-conflict societies landmines remain one of the greatest impediments to rebuilding and renewal”.

Mr President

It is in this context that South Africa will continue to play its role in advancing the humanitarian 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.