

14th Meeting of the States Parties
High Level Seminar on Victim Assistance - November 30th 2015

I would like to thank the presidency of the Kingdom of Belgium for its kind invitation to participate in this workshop. The presence of H.R.H. Princess Astrid is a clear evidence of the commitment of its country to this Convention.

Victim assistance, assumed as a responsibility of the State, is one of the core elements of the Mine Convention. And what is more, it is this liability that will certainly determine the future of the instrument.

Although all the processes related to compliance with the legal and political obligations deriving from the Convention provide a safeguard for the people against the danger posed by the use of weapons of this kind, my country has become increasingly aware, after years of working on this and other conventions, that support to the people affected is the chapter in which respect for and protection of the rights and dignity of human beings becomes tangible and concrete.

Reparation and reintegration of landmine victims is a moral and legal obligation that States have gradually started to comply with and my country believes that, at the present stage, it is appropriate to carry out an evaluation of what has been achieved so far and to search, together with other mechanisms, for ways to improve our future action with regard to this matter.

Chile will chair this Convention in 2016 and intends to charge itself with the responsibility by focusing on the people injured by landmines. This general focus was granted priority, since we know that the State Parties are fully committed to uphold their responsibilities under articles 4, 5, 6 and 7. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. Our presidency will be centered on human beings of flesh and blood, in other words on legally protected rights.

Assistance to victims of anti-personnel landmines, within the parameters of the Convention, translates into a wish.

In the preamble of the text, the State Parties express the wish to *“do their utmost in providing assistance for the care and rehabilitation of landmine victims including their social and economic reintegration”*. Likewise, in article 6(3) it is stated that each State Party **in a position to do so** shall provide assistance for care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.

Although this is a significant advancement in comparison to other international instruments, we have seen that, in practice, this wish of the States is not always fulfilled, many times due to lack of technical or financial resources. Faced with this reality, the losers are the people who are at the heart of the convention, namely victims.

As a way to remedy this, we have felt the necessity of providing concrete answers by offering specific support adapted to the needs of each State. In such a context, there is room to assess the difference of approach and capacities among individual States.

Many of them have succeeded in ensuring access to programs for post-traumatic physical and psychological support, or in their absence, developed these for victims and other people in need. Others, in addition to this, have developed programs for the social and economic inclusion of the affected individuals and other people with disabilities. Some have incorporated a gender approach in their national programs. There is no identifiable common pattern, due to the differences existing between States and the needs of victims.

Therefore, Chile intends to establish an advisory group of individuals, agencies and State representatives that may provide States with concrete recommendations and guidelines on how to ensure that the victim assistance obligations are realized. This guidance will describe a double approach, with efforts supported with VA earmarked funds on the one hand, and broader development and human rights efforts on the other. With this in mind, and on the basis of an information of the number of victims, the domestic legislation and the existence of national plans for victim assistance of affected States, we intend to cooperate with the presidencies of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, the OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN WOMEN, ILO, UNICEF, ICRC, ICBL-CMC and Handicap International, in order support practical measures for a select number of affected States, taking into account both the needs of victims and States, as well as each government's available resources, always bearing in mind that the victim should not be viewed as an object of charity, but as a holder of rights and that the assistance should be made available in a non – discriminatory manner

The State Parties to this Convention are *“determined to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, that kill or maim hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenseless civilians and especially children, obstruct economic development...”* and in order to achieve this goal emphasis should be placed on the principles already endorsed by the international community, such as: **the principle of national ownership, empowerment, an integrated approach, including a gender and age perspective, transparency, efficiency and sustainability.**

This shared goal of the States, Chile will try to give it concrete shape and lines of action.

We are well aware of the difficulties affected States may face in developing a system of services suited to meet the needs of all people. Chile has developed such a system and we therefore know the steps required to achieve inclusion of persons with disabilities, including survivors, in a comprehensive manner based on rights.

Therefore, and in view of the need to adequately address the challenge of victim protection and assistance, my country will make every effort to raise this chapter of the

Convention to highest attainable level through concrete measures and the development of joint programs that will provide ideas for possible actions to be carried out by States.

The Ottawa Convention is a national commitment Chile has been taking since long most seriously by complying with all the obligations contained in this instrument. As holders of the presidency, we will adopt a position of cooperation, transparency and efficiency, since we believe that we share a collective responsibility to protect individuals and to contribute to strengthening the mechanisms that protect the rights of victims and other people with disabilities. This, as I mentioned at the beginning, has no purpose other than to ensure the dignity of people, especially those who have been affected by anti-personnel mines, by strengthening efforts that ensure the effective enjoyment of their rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.