



European Union

**EU Statement on Victim Assistance
18th Meeting of State Parties
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 17 November 2020**

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

We would like to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance for all their work and in particular for actively seeking to reinforce cooperation and increase synergies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant human rights and disability actors and instruments.

While mine clearance programmes have a definite end, victim assistance is an on-going issue that requires long-term solutions. EU mine action is therefore a long-term commitment. We work with assistance organizations and national authorities in affected countries to use available resources effectively and to contribute to integrating victim assistance into broader disability and development policies at the national level. From this perspective, the EU is actively supporting the efforts of States Parties to implement their victim assistance actions.

In the context of our partnerships for victim assistance, the EU and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, with the ISU support, convened in Amman in September last year a Global Conference on Victim Assistance and Disabilities entitled “Fostering Partnerships”. The Conference provided 200 national disability rights and victim assistance experts, decision makers and persons with

*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

disabilities, including mine survivors, with opportunities to further explore challenges and good practices in aligning victim assistance efforts with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are glad to see the results of this initiative that led to two Victim Assistance Experts Meeting: the first in Oslo, during the Review Conference, and the second last week, virtually. It is especially important to preserve a sense of community between the experts of the most affected countries, giving them the opportunity to exchange information and best practices, even in such a difficult context.

The EU especially welcomes the work conducted during this year by the Victim Assistance Committee on Action 40 of the Oslo Action Plan, devoted to safety and protection of mine survivors in situations of risk and emergencies, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a hard reminder to all of us of the importance to do more to ensure the safety and protection of the most vulnerable groups in situations of risk and emergencies.

In the past years, the European Union has been supporting national stakeholder dialogues in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Senegal, South Sudan and Uganda so that all parties responsible for the wellbeing of mine-affected communities and survivors can better address the challenges they face through strengthened dialogue and partnerships. We will continue to support these States as they revise or develop inclusive national action plans. In the framework of the implementation of the ongoing Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/1428, efforts related to the integration of a victim assistance network in Colombia and development of a national disability/victim assistance action plan in Sudan are envisaged. With the input of the Committee on Victim Assistance, the new Council Decision will extend its support to States via national and/or regional stakeholders dialogues in the Americas, Europe, Central or South East Asia, the Middle East-North Africa, Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan regions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair