

**ICBL Statement on VA
18MSP of the Mine Ban Treaty, 16-20 November 2020**

Thank you Chair,

The 18MSP to the MBT is a rather unique gathering of states to review past achievements, progress, challenges and where appropriate re-map the way forward to the various pillars of the treaty. It is at this critical time that Victim Assistance be revisited and put to the front of the priority list of the Mine Ban Treaty. It is even more appropriate for states to ensure implementation of all the relevant Oslo Action Plan actions in the context of the new Action #40 regarding emergencies and conflict. The situation of Victim Assistance has worsened with the current pandemic of COVID-19. Responses to Landmine Monitor questions on COVID-19 noted that survivors and other persons with disabilities were not able to access services and rights on an equal basis to others during the pandemic in a number of mine-affected countries. This finding is consistent with a United Nations study that found persons with disabilities were at greater risk of discrimination in accessing healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, about three-quarters of new annual mine casualties were recorded in States Parties experiencing armed conflict.

Although victim assistance has seen some improvements in implementation by some states, persons injured still lack access to first aid, emergency medical care and trauma surgery, and survivors in most affected states still lack the necessary support and access to continuing medical care for corrective surgery, rehabilitation, livelihood and psychological care, which are recognized as the victims' rights. Many affected states have struggled in terms of priority, implementation and funding, and are now facing a much bigger challenge due to the prevailing pandemic of COVID-19.

Implementation of victim assistance is now than ever, more crucial in these difficult times. We call on donor states to extend the much needed support towards VA. Survivors need to be spared from going through more psychological trauma by having all states fulfil the vital promise of providing adequate assistance.

Thank you.

