



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

18th Meeting of the States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Statement under agenda item 9 a) Victim assistance

17 November 2020

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva office, UNMAS

Mr. President,¹

I have the pleasure to deliver the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA).²

The last couple of years have seen a worrying increase in the number of new victims from explosive ordnance globally, largely due to the widespread use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature by non-State armed groups in conflict situations. Thirty States Parties have significant numbers of mine victims. While the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention aims at preventing casualties from anti-personnel mines in the first place, it is also the first humanitarian and disarmament treaty to require action in support of victims.

¹ H.E. Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations in Geneva.

² The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action consists of twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.



Victim assistance is a set of concrete actions to meet the immediate and long-term needs of survivors, their families, mine-affected communities and persons with disabilities. It includes but is not limited to the following elements: emergency and long-term medical care, rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, and socio-economic inclusion. Victim assistance also requires States to develop and implement laws and policies that promote the rights of victims and to collect gender, age and disability disaggregated data on casualties, the needs of survivors and indirect victims, and available services.

The Oslo Action Plan includes important actions of States Parties in this respect. Just to name a few, States Parties agreed to develop victim assistance action plans, pursue multi-sectoral efforts in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, establish or strengthen casualty databases and national referral mechanisms and ensure the accessibility of first aid, rehabilitation, psychological and psychosocial support services.

The United Nations has a dedicated Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action, and the UN Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023 commits UN entities to the provision of assistance to “survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance for equal access to health and education and full participation in social and economic life”. The Mine Action Service has assisted the Federal Government of Somalia to draft and launch a Disabilities and Victim Assistance National Plan of Action at the Review Conference last year. In Colombia, UNMAS supported government efforts to provide referral for assistance to women and men survivors. In the West Bank, a referral and medical assistance mechanism for survivors of landmines and ERW was added to the database of the Palestinian Mine Action Centre.

However, much remains to be done. Many States Parties with significant numbers of victims lack action plans and many others have plans that are not being implemented. Reliable referral systems are equally lacking. The lack of progress is often due to a lack of



funding for victim assistance. We therefore call on those States in a position to do so to provide earmarked funding for victim assistance.

Excellencies,

The pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on persons with disabilities, mine victims among them. The United Nations therefore urges States Parties to prioritise sustainable victim assistance and stands ready to support them in this endeavour.

Thank you.