

EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES

16 TO 20 NOVEMBER 2020

Committee on Victim Assistance

Tuesday 17 November

Agenda item: 9. Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention

a) Assisting the victims: Conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Victim Assistance

1. Excellencies, dear colleagues, it is an honour to address you as the Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance for the last time this year. At the outset, let me commend you Mr. President for the excellent work you have done in leading the work of the Convention this year, despite the difficult circumstances to which we are confronted.
2. I would like to thank my colleagues on the Committee, Chile, Sweden and Thailand for their valuable collaboration this year. Also, I would like to thank the ICBL and the ICRC - observer members of the Committee - whose continued effort is appreciated for the fulfilment of our goals under the Convention: promote the rights and meet the needs of mine survivors.
3. And of course, I would like to extend our gratitude to the ISU for its support to the Committee. At times not always easy, we deeply appreciate its efforts in pursuing its tasks and the amount of support provided to Member States. Thank you.
4. Excellencies, dear colleagues, despite of the pandemic challenges this year, I am pleased to report that the Committee, in accordance with its mandates, has continued to provide support to the States Parties with significant numbers of mine victims, including by undertaking the following activities in 2020:
 - a) In recognizing the importance of multi-sectoral effort and taking advantage of synergies, on 27 January, the Committee convened a retreat to increase cooperation with Geneva based actors involved in VA, such as the Committee on Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Convention, VA and Cooperation and Assistance Coordinators of the CCM, representatives of the ICBL, the ICRC, Humanity and Inclusion, UNMAS and the Secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities / OHCHR.

- b) To raise awareness and strengthen synergies, the Committee delivered statements in relevant fora including during the annual debate on the rights of persons with disability of the Human Rights Council on 6 March and during the opening of the twenty-third session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 17 August. Additionally, the Committee participated on a panel concerning VA during the CCW Protocol V meeting on 28 September.
- c) To support the efforts of the States Parties, Committee provided the States Parties with a VA Checklist to assist them with reporting, measuring and establishing baselines on their national VA efforts. Several States Parties including Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand, Yemen and Zimbabwe, have reported employing the Checklist. The Checklist is available on the Convention's website in accessible format in Arabic, English, French and Spanish languages.
- d) To increase our understandings of challenges faced by the States Parties with significant numbers of mine victims, and to discuss objectives and new VA commitments acquired with the adoption of the Oslo Action Plan, during the week of the UN National Mine Action Directors Meeting in February and on the margins of the Intersessional Meetings in June, the Committee met with representatives of the following States Parties with significant number of mine victims under their jurisdiction or control: *Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.*
- e) In response to a support request by Guinea-Bissau to the Committee, VA Implementation Support Officer of the ISU carried out a visit to Guinea - Bissau from 18 to 20 February to provide technical support and raise awareness on requirements of VA in the framework of the Convention and the OAP among the relevant national ministries and stakeholders and subsequently provided the government with recommendations for strengthening implementation measures on VA.
- f) On 1 July, at the Intersessional Meetings the Committee held a panel discussion on *Safety and Protection of Mine Survivors in Situations of Risks and Humanitarian Emergencies*, to increase understandings on the significance of the safety and protection of mine survivors and to offer expert recommendations on how they can be achieved over the next five years. The panel drew attention on possible disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mine survivors and to keep abreast of good practices in this

regard, in order to reduce risks and consequences on lives and livelihoods of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. Experts included representatives of Colombia, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, the ICRC, Humanity & Inclusion and Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations. I like to extend Committee's thanks to all of them.

g) Last week on 11 November, the Committee hosted *the 2020 VA Experts meeting*. The objective of the VA Experts Meeting was to raise awareness and enhanced understandings on safety and protection needs of mine victims in situations of risk and emergencies, expanding on the panel discussion the Committee held at the Intersessional Meetings on 1st July. I am very pleased to report that the day-long VA Experts meeting was productive: ample tools, guidance, good practices and resources on Action 40 were exchanged and shared. We discussed the safety and protection of mine survivors from various perspectives, including from a human rights-based approach, from the requirements for inclusive humanitarian and development policies and programmes, to the application of an integrated approach at policy and service levels. Around 50 delegates representing States Parties with victim assistance responsibilities, UN agencies, survivors' network and the ICBL, have attended the meeting. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank all the expert presenters for their valuable contributions - Humanity & Inclusion, UNMAS, the International Disability Alliance (IDA), UNICEF, UNHCR and all delegates and VA experts from Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Jordan, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Tajikistan who shared their experiences in implementing Action #40 and other aspects of victim assistance commitments in the Oslo Action Plan. Information on the 2020 VA Experts meeting will be made available on the Convention's website.

5. Excellencies, dear colleagues, in building on the preliminary observations the Committee presented at the Intersessional Meetings in July and following our dialogue over the past year, the Committee has worked to establish a baseline for implementation of the Oslo Action Plan which you can find in the Conference documents. As you will read in the report, the Committee is pleased to observe good progresses made in the implementation of the nine VA actions of the OAP, however, we also observe that several States Parties face major challenges in terms of data collection, rehabilitation, social and economic inclusion and resources. I invite you to take a look at the report and to continue working with the Committee to continue strengthening our collaboration and understanding of our remaining challenge and how to address it.

6. Before I open the floor for the debate, I wish to draw your attention on one important matter. As you may have noticed from the 2020 Landmine Monitor report released last week, unfortunately, high numbers of casualties have been reported for the fifth year in a row. This is a very sad reminder to all of us to reaffirm our commitments to prevent new casualties. The Committee extends its solidarity and support to all mine victims, to all States Parties facing this difficulty. The Committee encourages the international community to increase their efforts to ensure all mine survivors, affected families and communities receive the assistance they need.
7. Now before we proceed allow me to offer the floor to Chile who served as the Committee's gender focal point over the course of the past year.