

Statement made by Austria, 20.09.06, Victim Assistance

Madam President,

I would like to make a couple of remarks that are additional to the statement distributed on behalf of the Finish EU Presidency on Monday, September 18.

Madam President,

Let me commence with expressing my deep appreciation for all your efforts in steering our meeting and in ensuring the best possible results of our common work here during this week and beyond!

I would also like to thank the Co-Chairs of the Victim Assistance Standing Committee, Afghanistan and Switzerland, for their invaluable contribution to further enhance our understanding of the issues at hand and also in providing concrete outcomes on specific questions. I would like to pay tribute to the folder prepared in a joint effort of various actors which is a good example for concrete outcomes of our work. If widely distributed and used it could make a real difference for the situation of mine victims.

Madam President,

During our deliberations yesterday and this morning, we have witnessed a number of impressive presentations and statements showing how much States and organisations are already doing to ameliorate the life of those who fell victim to this odious weapon and were lucky enough to

survive. I think we all agree that – while considerable progress has been made – more needs to be done and we need not only to continue, but to reinforce our efforts in that regard.

It is a societal challenge and responsibility to ensure that mine survivors are enabled to live a full and happy life in dignity after all!

I would want us to recall the film that was shown by the Landmine Survivors Network during the opening ceremony on Monday and let us also recall the pictures of those maimed playing football, working as tailors or photographers and pointing the way towards a happy and productive way of life – against all odds if I may say so.

The film also sent a clear and strong message on how we should approach assistance to survivors: nothing about survivors without survivors. Because it is for the survivors and with the survivors we need to work.

Yesterday Amb. Streuli of Switzerland highlighted that victim assistance objectives should be SMART, that is to say specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. This of course is relatively easy said, but a challenge to achieve. In this context, we believe it to be very important to continue to work towards establishing such smart objectives and – of course – achieving them for all the 24 affected countries. In doing so, it is necessary to take into consideration the differing circumstances in those States.

We welcome the progress already achieved in some countries and are grateful for the reports we received over the last two days.

Austria is committed to further concentrate on assistance to survivors. Indeed, the Austrian Federal Act on Development Assistance requires us to take appropriate care of the needs of persons with disabilities in our development cooperation activities. Austria also warmly welcomes the recent adoption of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities – the first human rights convention to be adopted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

The requirement to take care of the needs of persons with disabilities is also reflected in the Austrian Mine Action Strategy that ~~foresees a~~ <sup>counts</sup> ~~percentage of~~ up to 40 percent which is set aside for projects dealing with assistance to mine survivors. Moreover, we are increasingly considering the integration of mine victim assistance efforts in to wider development cooperation activities concentrating on capacity building.

We have also decided to fund the victim assistance specialist of the Implementation Support Unit of our Convention and we are looking forward to work with her closely over the course of the next year.

Madam President,

It is an honour for Austria to join with Sudan in taking on the responsibility of Co-Chairing the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration in 2006-2007.

We have big shoes to fill to follow the example given by Afghanistan and Switzerland in 2006.

In undertaking its responsibilities as Co-Chair, Austria sees its efforts grounded in the commitments we made in adopting the Nairobi Action

Plan and the other understandings we agreed to on victim assistance at the First Review Conference.

Austria feels that it has a special responsibility in advancing the aims of the Nairobi Action Plan.

With respect to the understandings we agreed to in Nairobi, we intend to follow-up where our predecessors left off, by acting upon the fact that if meaningful difference is going to be made we need - as I already pointed out - SMART objectives.

In this regard, we will place a priority on advancing progress by the 24 States Parties which have self-identified being the most profound cases where in that regard.

By continuing to provide support to inter-ministerial processes that involve experts in the areas of health care, social services, rehabilitation, vocational training and human rights, we hope that significant advances can be made.

Finally, Austria intends to continue to place an emphasis on the importance of the involvement of landmine survivors in all matters that concern them, in accordance with Action 38 of the Nairobi Action Plan.

Madam President,

The Mine Ban Treaty has given a promise to survivors for a better life. In essence, the Treaty is a sign of hope for the world, for the victims of this odious weapon, the men, women and children wounded and maimed.

We are committed to do our share in keeping up this sign of hope and to do what we can, do assist the survivors in a desire that we all share: to live a good, productive and happy life.

I thank you very much, Madam President.