

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION  
ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND  
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR  
DESTRUCTION**

**Dead Sea, Jordan, 18-22 November 2007**

**Item 11 (d) Assisting the Victims**

**Statement by Armin Kohli**

**21 November 2007**

Salam aleikum, and thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to talk to you here.

During my long trip across Europe and the Middle East, I crossed so many mine affected countries. On my bike, I passed the first mine field already in Croatia, and I passed the very last one right here, coming down to the Dead Sea.

On a bicycle, you travel at a comparatively slow speed. You go from village to village, from town to town. In almost every country I passed, I spent several days. And I had the opportunity to meet with local campaigners and with land mine victims. And what I have heard and seen, ladies and gentleman, is frightening me!

In one south-eastern European country, an important international NGO specialised in Victim Assistance told me that their budget for next year is cut by one third. In a neighbouring country, another main Victim Assistance NGO told me that they are preparing an "exit strategy" because the donors reduce their funds more and more.

I have been in Bosnia and have seen the pride of the local Red Cross Campaigners of their successful Risk Education Programme which has brought the number of casualties significantly down. But they informed me also about Survivors in remote areas of the country living a miserable life.

I went to South Lebanon where I was told that donors like to finance Risk Education Programmes because of the good visibility they get, but that it is so difficult to find funds for Victim Assistance. Finally in Syria, survivors told me their stories. They are in desperate need for assistance, as international aid is almost nonexistent there.

And this, ladies and gentleman, is really frightening me! So I urge you to increase the funds for Victim Assistance. Because if the victims get the assistance they need and merit, they can live a normal life like you and me.

Thank you.