



Statement of the Holy See Delegation
8 MSP to the Mine Ban Convention

*Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention :
Assisting the victims*

Dead Sea, Jordan, 21 November 2007

Mr. President,

The Holy See delegation would like to express its appreciation to Your Royal Highness, to the people and Government of Jordan for the excellent way you organized this meeting. My delegation expresses also its support to your efforts that the peoples and States of the Middle East region could draw benefit from joining the Landmine Ban Convention.

Mine Ban Treaty and Mine Ban action continue to make progress towards eradicating antipersonnel landmines. But significant challenges remain in some areas; survivor and victim assistance being one of them.

Victim assistance, as per art.6 of the treaty, stands out as a core component of mine action and an obligation of States Parties under the Convention. Ten years after the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty, measures are yet to be taken to ensure the much needed survivor assistance. In the meantime, funding has become less than needed for many mine action programs.

The survivor and victim assistance activities should be a priority for both States parties and States not parties to the Convention, especially those involved in conflicts. Often conflicts, capacity and financial constraints, and lack of continued international support stifle the victims assistance programs.

Although survivor assistance is the prime responsibility of an affected State, consistent and long-term support by the international community is needed. Victims assistance is a basic human rights issue. Therefore, the Holy See, through its Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers and various institutions and humanitarian organizations, is providing continuous assistance to a number of landmine victims and survivors.

Mr. President,

The Holy See is particularly concerned about the ongoing tragic situation of mine survivors and victims. Last Sunday, 18 November, addressing a large crowd of pilgrims and visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square in Rome for the noon Angelus blessing, His Holiness

Pope Benedict XVI added his voice in support of all victims of landmines and conveyed his good wishes to those participating in this meeting of States parties. In his message, the Pontiff expressed the “heartfelt best wishes and encouragement for a good outcome of the Conference so that these ordnances that continue to make victims, including many children, are completely banned”.

Mr. President,

It is essential to put always the human person, the victims, their families and communities, at the centre of our activities and concern. It is true that all the articles of the Convention are interconnected. But the main concern of all obligations should remain the human person.

To put the victims at the centre of our work means to make available financial, and specially, human resources, in order to create the necessary conditions which enable victims to fully occupy their legitimate place in the society. The common effort of all actors should aim to open the way to every victim, as a free person endowed with dignity and worth, to fully play his/her social, economic and political role in the society. To translate this principle into reality, the victim assistance dimension should remain our priority and be very high on our agenda.

In order to avoid discrimination between victims, it is imperative to seek a lasting coordination to harmonize all assistance activities within the framework of the antipersonnel landmines convention, the Protocol V annexed to the CCW, the future instrument on Cluster Munitions, and the Action Plan related to Small arms and light weapons, etc.

The victims - all victims - have rights and it is imperative to respect these rights, starting with the right to life, human dignity and security. The compassion dimension and human closeness is also of importance to victims and constitute an invaluable support, especially during the difficult moments of this human tragedy that landmine victims face, in many cases, alone and in the face of general indifference.

Mr President, the success of our convention will be measured by our ability to respond properly also to the challenges of the rehabilitation and reintegration of all landmine victims and survivors, and thus to offer them credible hope for a better future.

Thank you.