

**ICBL AND LANDMINE MONITOR**  
**STATEMENT ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE**  
**Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty**  
**Dead Sea, Jordan**  
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**Delivered by Katleen Maes, Landmine Monitor**

Your Royal Highness, co-chairs, colleagues, friends, thank you for giving the ICBL and Landmine Monitor this opportunity to speak. Let me begin by expressing my appreciation and congratulations to those involved in including a growing number of victim assistance experts from the so-called VA24 countries in these meetings and for setting up an interesting side-program, which allows these experts and survivors to exchange experiences and to have in-depth discussions, which have already had a profound positive impact and will undoubtedly continue to do so.

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Let me start with some of the good news we have found through our Landmine Monitor research. Never before have fewer new casualties been recorded and never before have we seen such progress made by the VA24. This is due to the collective hard work of dedicated individuals, organizations, and you, governments.

I would like to thank the VA24 experts for providing updates on progress in meeting their 2005-2009 objectives. Your updates are very useful for us to understand the challenges faced and achievements made. Today's presentations inspired me and prompted me into action and to both rethink and revise what I was planning to say this afternoon. This is a good thing. Many of your updates have improved significantly and I am hopeful that the VA24 will make substantially more progress in the years to come. And this is needed, because, Landmine Monitor has found that only 11 of the VA24 have made sufficient progress between 2006 and August 2007. This is based on the VA24 states' own reporting on their 2005-2009 objectives and other information provided to Landmine Monitor. Adequate progress was assessed as a state attaining at least 50 percent of its submitted objectives by the VA24 process halfway point of 2007.

Of course, this is not a black and white issue. We acknowledge it can take years before measures show visible results. And we can only report on what we know, so we invite all of you in this room to read your Landmine Monitor country reports and provide us with as much information as possible. We cannot monitor fairly and objectively without you.

Therefore, I particularly like DRC's intention to conduct a mid-term evaluation of its 2005-2009 progress. I encourage you all to follow this example and present us with your own mid-term evaluations next time we meet.

At this halfway point to the 2009 Review Conference, we would urge you all to be concrete and pragmatic, but also hopeful. Because, your plans do sound good on paper, but you should also always consider how they will have a direct positive impact on the lives of survivors. Do not be afraid of bringing challenges to the forefront and to discuss them in earnest. The only time when you will not be facing challenges, is when you do absolutely nothing. Challenges are there to be overcome and we all have the responsibility to work on finding win-win solutions. Remember, while the prime responsibility falls upon you as affected states, you are not alone in solving the problem.

I do not think that any of us are fooled into complacency or a false sense of security. Successful implementation of the victim assistance requirements of the Mine Ban Treaty will not be guaranteed for a long, long time. Even as the number of new casualties decreases, the number of survivors continues to grow. Survivors aspire to be productive and respected contributors to all our societies who sustain their lives and the lives of their families, often with great difficulty.

While we cannot ask for the sun and the moon, some people will continue to say that not enough has been done. And that is an easy thing to do when only a quarter of services all over the world adequately meet the needs of survivors, their families and communities. Economic reintegration efforts, the number one priority of survivors themselves, are particularly weak. Surprisingly, the VA24 do not score any better than those countries with similar development levels and problems, outside of the treaty. The lack of national capacity and ownership is still a major impediment for improvement.

By mentioning this, many of you probably think that the ICBL is saying that not enough has been done, once again. So, let us change this routine: be creative, realistic and prompted into action. Because a lot of progress has been made in the past 10 years: we understand the issue and its scope better, we are more coordinated and *SMART*-er. But a few simple actions can be taken.

One of these should be to include survivors, their families and communities in your policy and decision-making processes at every level. They know best how their needs and rights can be met in full. We had some frank discussions with the survivors in the parallel session yesterday and they raised many important questions, such as national ownership, and who of you have to the mandate to make a positive change back home. Rather than listening to them informing and lobbying you, include them as equal members in your delegations. Too few survivors are sitting behind government placards in this room today, but we cannot do anything for them without them.

The survivors in this room are successful people and they represent many people in their villages. Listen and learn from them, and make sure they do not remain the isolated success stories they still are, nearly 10 years after signing the Mine Ban Treaty. Others, the most vulnerable, have a right to demand our life-long support; not only in the VA24 but everywhere in the world.

I feel many people are still afraid of VA. So, allow me to ask: is victim assistance really so much more difficult and is its progress so much more difficult to measure than daunting clearance tasks and deadlines?

I do not think so.

Yes, victim assistance is linked to the provision of services from a wide range of actors in society. But we also have the wealth of this entire society to make a positive change, not just a few clearance experts.

Yes, VA is complex and deals with the intricacies of life, but it also consists of hard, cold and entirely measurable facts. Ten years after the MBT signing, data collection is still largely inadequate, 92 percent of casualties in 2006 occurred in places with incomplete data

collection. How will you plan and improve your assistance efforts if you do not record certain groups of casualties for political reasons, their injuries, their socio-economic situation or the assistance they have received? Are we allowing these casualties to become 'data victims' and forever be deprived of adequate aid?

Yes VA is long-term and cannot have a deadline. But is it unreasonable to ask for some sort of deadline by which the first assistance is delivered? Is it unreasonable for all states with mine survivors to set SMART objectives, turn them into concrete plans with sufficient budgets to implement these plans? Or do we find it acceptable that people are still waiting for the same things as 10 years ago? Are measurable objectives and actions, paired with detailed progress reporting not the way to stop the ever-dwindling VA funding from spiralling down even further?

Challenges will remain and situations change and this brings me to my final point: Iraq. I would like to congratulate you, Iraq, for acceding to the MBT and for being here with us. But I also want to briefly attract your attention to the fact that Iraq is one of the most severely mine/ERW affected countries in the world with indeed the greatest numbers of survivors, but also needs and responsibilities for victim assistance.

In conclusion, let me remind you of what Song Kosal said Saturday. Survivors awaken our conscience and renew our awareness to what war and weapons can do to human beings. The aspirations of survivors, their families and communities should be the driving force of victim assistance to meet their right to have a rewarding and complete life. In the process, we become more genuinely human ourselves. Let us respond with increased energy, resources and creativity to amend the past and protect the future.