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ICBL AND SURVIVOR STATEMENT ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE
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Thank you, Co-Chair.

My name is Bekele from Ethiopia, and I am here with my colleagues, Rula from Jordan and Rafai from Algeria. We are speaking on behalf of survivors and the ICBL.

We have heard the statements of the affected countries and while we recognize that States have supported efforts, we, the persons with disabilities, do not see that those efforts translate into the elimination of the barriers that affect us. In this regard, would like to bring to the attention of the States some recommendations. Our first four points are in relation to some of the Victim Assistance elements articulated in the 2004 Nairobi Action Plan:

1. **Emergency and ongoing medical care:** Emergency and ongoing care should be widely available in mine-affected regions- we still frequently see that after an accident in the field, victims cannot reach appropriate medical care in time to save their lives. Furthermore, many survivors only have access to a "one-off" surgery, while many of us need one or more follow up and reconstructive surgery.
2. **Psychological support and social inclusion:** This element is often neglected but is of vital importance to guarantee the full inclusion of survivors in society. More attention should be paid to including peer-to-peer support and family support as part of victim assistance projects.
3. **Economic inclusion:** As of today, it remains one of the priorities for most survivors. All barriers should be eliminated for persons with disabilities to have equal opportunities instead of being dependent on charity. Economic opportunities should be developed, and social security and safety nets should be in place to cover survivors. Raising awareness on the capacities and rights of persons with disabilities to work will help to dispel stigmas.
4. **Laws and policies:** It is essential to have adequate national legislation and policies that promote and protect the human rights of persons with disabilities, and to have follow-up mechanisms that ensure these laws and policies are actually enforced and implemented. An effort should be made for persons with disabilities to know their rights under international and national laws, and to understand the procedures to claim these human rights.

We would also like to share with you some recommendations related to the ICBL guiding principles for Victim Assistance, which are of particular concern:

- **Inclusion of survivors** should be the starting point for all victim assistance processes and decision-making. In accordance with the Nairobi Action Plan, we encourage more States to include survivors as part of their delegations, such as Guinea-Bissau and Afghanistan; and to ensure that National Action Plans really respond to the priorities of survivors as articulated by us. The parallel program on victim assistance organized by Austria and Sudan is positive example.



- **A gender perspective should be included in all projects** so that countries ensure the rights of the women are respected, and that they have equal access to all services available to persons with disabilities.
- **A principle of non-discrimination** should be applied between military and civilian survivors – all should have access to the same adequate level of assistance. Furthermore, there should be no discrimination between victims of mines, cluster munitions and other persons with disabilities.
- **Victim assistance is a cross-cutting issue** that should be discussed by Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, Labor, human rights mechanisms and other concerned stakeholders,
- **And of course, the basis of all our victim assistance efforts:** remember that victim assistance is a human rights issue. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities articulates clearly how to ensure all persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors, can enjoy all human rights.

We would like to renew our call for all State Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as part of their efforts to implement victim assistance. States can meet Victim Assistance obligations by implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities.

Although 118 countries have signed the Convention so far, only 7 States have ratified it, of which only one is a victim assistance priority country, Croatia. We ask all countries to sign and ratify this Convention and its optional protocol.

Finally, we would like to congratulate those States that have increased their funding for overall Mine Action, but the ICBL is concerned that only a very small percentage of this funding is going to victim assistance. If this treaty is really about stopping the suffering caused by landmines, assistance to survivors should remain a priority for States.

Sustainability can only be ensured if funding is consistent: over 450,000 survivors have the right to receive assistance throughout their lives. Ensuring a long-term impact will only be possible if resource mobilization is strengthened at national and international level year after year – this is the commitment that State Parties have taken, and the expectations of all of us who have seen their rights impaired as a result of the presence of landmines.

Thank you, Co-Chair.