

Dear Mr. President,

Today we see the great evolution in victim assistance as in most countries

- infrastructure to provide assistance is created,
- the principles of victim assistance are known to planners and implementers and
- to our great pleasure 10 years lessons learned lead to strong victim assistance article in the Convention on Cluster Munitions

So how this has changed the day to day life of survivors even in the remote areas?

For a decade now, we, survivors and our representative organizations, have taken the stand at these meetings to alert you, over 20 times that not enough is being done to provide adequate assistance to survivors and other persons with disabilities. With just one year left until the 2<sup>nd</sup> review conference states will be asked to report on their achievements of the last five years in improving the day to day life of survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Our network on the ground has been telling us that States still have challenges ahead to fulfill their commitments by 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Conference.

For example they say:

- National ownership and capacity remains weak
- Lack of coordination and lack of VA focal points within government ministries has been slowing down the services.
- Many of the VA26 States are not able to allocate national funds to assist the victims (or survivors?)
- Donors do not consider the victim assistance to be equal to other mine action components
- Access to existing services, as well as good quality services still are big challenges

We, the victim assistance experts who are also survivors, better understand our needs and rights and have, year after year, increase our capacity to work with you. We will never give up, but we can only get the task done if everyone – affected states, donor states, survivors, campaigners and intergovernmental organizations – works together to achieve what states themselves have committed to in the area of victim assistance.

To the ICBL, the real people affected are the most important part of the treaty. So, for the Second Review Conference, we will put even more emphasis on victim assistance to make real progress on the ground.

This week some of our VA focal points met with their country's delegation to discuss how to get the best possible results by the Second Review Conference. Because we want the states to:

- Meet their outlined objectives on victim assistance by the Second Review Conference
- Develop SMART objectives, realistic plans and find sufficient resources for victim assistance for, at least, the next five years.
- Not only do we want you to make plans, we urge you to be ready to implement them right after the conference.

As I mentioned, we, the victim assistance focal points, are committed in supporting you to achieve these three goals.

We have discussed the challenges earlier, and actually we have also come up with some possible solutions to them:

- **Joint quick review of the existing action plans or objectives for 2009 and find the best ways of comprehensive and effective implementation of the actions before the Second Review Conference;**
- **Continue to allocate responsibilities among ministries and disability stakeholders, which will also ensure a more efficient use of national funds;**
- **Begin the development of SMART objectives, realistic plans for post-2009, as well as activities by already starting consultations at the district, provincial, regional and national levels now, including survivors;**
- **Ensure the necessary political will to implement these actions;**
- **Develop and strengthen the necessary means to reach survivors in remote areas;**
- **Actively seek the technical support of survivors and their organizations or other civil society stakeholders interested in fulfilling your plans and objectives.**

As you can notice we have a lot to offer but we need *your* commitment to work with us, pave the way to make this happen.

We need *you* to send a clear message back to your relevant government agencies that they should join this collaborative effort for making Progress on the Ground.