

**Eight Meeting of the States Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
Geneva, 24-28 November 2008**

ICRC Statement on Victim Assistance

Thank you Mr. President,

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, let me begin by thanking States Parties for have taken the floor and reported today on the status of implementation of their Victim Assistance Programmes.

Currently, the ICRC through its Physical Rehabilitation Programme and through its Special Fund for the Disabled, provides assistance in 54 countries, including 19 which are part of the group of 26 States which have a significant number of survivors. In these countries, assistance is given to the authorities in developing and implementing national plans, to centres, ensuring they can provide the services and to survivors to ensure they can access the services. Each year, approximately 50% of the total numbers of prostheses delivered within the network of centres assisted by the ICRC are for mine survivors. This represents more than 10,000 prostheses. Despite our efforts and despite the efforts provided by other organizations, we know that we are not meeting all the needs. Many people with physical impairments, including mine survivors, still face challenges and difficulties in accessing services, despite their rights to have access to services.

Guided by the Nairobi Action Plan and the work of the various Co-chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration with the support of the ISU, the concept of Victim Assistance has been better defined. In addition, since 2005, the most affected States Parties have been supported to develop SMART Victim Assistance objectives and to develop national plans to implement those objectives. This increasingly focussed and nationally oriented work is encouraging. While significant progress has been achieved among the 26 most affected States Parties, the ICRC knows that, in the field, most survivors are still far from seeing the type of benefits which the preamble of this Convention promises, "to put an end" to the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

The Landmine Monitor Report 2008 has indicated that the number of casualties reported continued to decrease. This is excellent news; however each year in which the total number of survivors' worldwide increases, the burden of affected-countries that already faced difficulties in providing assistance also increased. Only few countries have a reliable and consistent data gathering mechanism, meaning that the number of casualties is certainly higher than those reported. As reported by Landmine Monitor, the Angolan Commission on Demining and Humanitarian Assistance stated that the situation of mine/ERW survivors in Angola needs to be considered "grave due their number and the services available". With a cumulative large number of survivors, providing assistance to survivors remains a main challenge for Angola. In this regard it maybe important to note that after 30 years of physical rehabilitation assistance, the ICRC halted its support in June 2008, believing that Angola has all the necessary means to provide effective assistance to survivors.

It is essential that all the 26 States Parties with large numbers of mine victims have in place comprehensive national plans to achieve tangible improvements in services available for mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. It is primarily the responsibility of States Parties to take ownership of services to people with disabilities, including survivors from any types of weapons (mine, ERW, cluster munitions). It is crucial that affected countries increase their commitment to ensure that their existing victim assistance objectives and plans of actions are effectively implemented. For example in Afghanistan, which has developed a

set of SMART objectives and a plan of action to implement these objectives, the Ministry of Public Health only managed one physical rehabilitation centre among the 14 centres within the country. Nearly all physical rehabilitation services provided each year in Afghanistan, are provided by the 13 centres managed by supporting organizations, including the ICRC which manages 6 of them. Despite progress made in Afghanistan and in most affected countries, States are still not able to cope with the needs of people with disabilities. These needs, which are based on basic human rights, continued to be highly dependant on the support provided by international organizations such as the ICRC or by non-governmental organizations.

It is equally important that, sufficient funds are available to implement victim assistance programmes. The overall level of funding, by affected countries and by donor's States Parties, continues to be insufficient to cope with the growing numbers of survivors. As reported by the Landmine Monitor Report 2008, international funding for mine action decreased by approximately 10% compare to 2006, while for the same period national funding increased by 39%. However, from what we see in the field, most physical rehabilitation centres continued to face financial difficulties, due to lack of national funding to cover their basic running costs.

Victim assistance has traditionally been the most difficult pillar of the Convention to implement and measure because it is not carried out by a distinct field of professional activity like other pillars of mine action. Currently, most affected States Parties in their statements provide status reports instead of progress reports, which make it difficult to measure the improvements for the survivors. In advance of the 2nd Review Conference, next year, we believe that much more needs to be done to monitor progress in the affected States of their plans of action and to monitor the real impacts for persons with disabilities including survivors.

While we focus on State Parties, we should not forget that survivors also need assistance in Non-States Parties. Each year, the ICRC ensures access to physical rehabilitation services for mine survivors in China, Myanmar, Russian Federation, Pakistan and India.

While we believe that the overall situation has significantly improved since Nairobi and while affected States Parties has increased their activities and support to assist survivors, much work is needed to ensure full inclusion in society of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors and survivors of other types of weapons (ERW, cluster munitions).

The ICRC will continue providing support to survivors and to affected countries. We will also closely work with the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration and with the ISU. However, we urge all States Parties to do more to ensure that mine survivors in all affected countries will experience measurable and tangible improvements in their lives in advance of the 2nd Review Conference next year.

Thank you.