

9th Meeting of States Parties
Anti-personell Landmine Ban Convention
Victim Assistance
Statement by NORWAY, 27 november 2008
Mr. president,

The very purpose of the Mine Ban Convention is to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by antipersonnel mines. To turn the treaty's obligations into real changes for survivors and other persons with disabilities, we need to ensure that the necessary attention is given to article VI of the Convention, Victim Assistance.

Mr. President,

Testimonies from survivors show us lives which have been totally changed, and where blame, resentment and shame are often featuring. Coping with the new situation of life is challenging. Tackling the stigma and discrimination as a disabled man or woman makes life even harder. We know that children survivors are often taken out of school, and female survivors are more often abandoned by their spouses or shunned by their families. Disabled women often experience double discrimination, first as disabled and then as women. Statistics show that male survivors outnumber female, and victim assistance has often been tailored to this situation. But women are exposed to a variety of challenges in connection with mine injuries: as mine survivors, but also as wives and mother to survivors and as relatives with care-taking responsibilities for survivors. This convention has to have a broad approach to the definition of victims. Survivors and their organisations have been key to reach this crucial understanding. Norway is also convinced that a gender and age sensitive approach in all victim assistance efforts will enhance both effectiveness and efficiency.

Evidence suggests that survivors and people with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poor. Given that survivors and people with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty than their peers without disabilities, it is essential to ensure that they are integrated into all development activities in order to provide equal opportunities and non-discrimination in their exercise and enjoyment of human rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force earlier this year. The convention represents a shift in the understanding of disability, from a *medical* to a *social* model that recognizes that limitations created by a disability is not a problem of the person, but rather a problem of barriers in society.

We hope that this new Convention will lead to real implementation on the ground with significant improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities wherever they may live. For rights guaranteed at the international level, are only real rights when they are safeguarded at the community level. We hope that The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions will fortify each other and improve the lives and rights of people with disabilities.

Mr President,

Last year we celebrated the 10 years' anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention and the Second Review Conference is just around the corner. At the first review conference in Nairobi state parties adopted the Nairobi Action Plan on victim assistance. This included a clear understanding of principles to guide our efforts in victim assistance.

Norway wants to emphasize that the VA26 and other mine affected countries must take action on the six components of Victim Assistance:

- Emergency and continuing medical care
- Physical rehabilitation
- Psychological support and social reintegration
- Economic reintegration
- Laws and public policies

The main responsibility for victim assistance lies with the mine affected countries' themselves, and national capacity must be built also at government level, not only in NGOs. All State Parties are obliged to assist the authorities in mine-affected countries to fulfil their endeavours to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

In order to avoid duplication, and to ensure effective and sustainable programs, victim assistance should be an integrated part of national development plans and overall disability action plans.

To secure that the services provided are tailored to the needs of the survivors and disabled persons, their participation and inclusion is crucial in every intervention. Disabled people's organisations have valuable experiences from working with disabled people and disability specific knowledge, and should be considered as partners in all stages; planning, implementation and monitoring.

Mr President,

As a result of the first review conference in Nairobi many of the VA26 countries have developed objectives or national action plans on victim assistance. Our ambitions have been high. The situation for the survivors, and how we – the State Parties – have approached the goal set in the Nairobi action plan must be a key issue at the II Review Conference.

Thank you, Mr President.

