



*Co-winner of Nobel Peace Prize*

## **Statement by Handicap International**

Anti - Personnel Mine Ban Convention  
Second International Pledging Conference  
27<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
Geneva, Switzerland

Distinguished delegates  
Excellencies  
Colleagues

On behalf of Handicap International I would like to thank you for giving the opportunity to civil society to raise our voice and to share with you our comments.

We would like to express our gratitude for the tremendous dedication of all donors in allowing Handicap International, and other operators, to continue to work in support of Article 5 completion, realisation of the Maputo Action Plan on Victim Assistance, and in support of our wider work to clear Cluster Munitions and other Explosive Remnants of War. As an organisation that is implementing activities to support all pillars of Humanitarian Mine Action, and which has worked across 42 affected states over 35 years, we have effectively and efficiently saved the lives and limbs of people living in contaminated areas; maximising impact by capitalising on synergies between these pillars.

And while as a Humanitarian Mine Action operator we have seen the results and the success of the Mine Ban Convention very clearly, we remain acutely aware of the challenges that are ahead of us:

- According to the Landmine Monitor, armed conflict in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen have created a sharp rise in the number of casualties. The Monitor recorded a 75% increase in the number of casualties by landmines and explosive remnants of war in 2015; this is the highest recorded total since 2006.
- Sadly, at a time when casualties were increasing, we also witnessed international and national support to clear landmine and ERW contamination and assist victims decline to a 10 year low. The dearth of long-term multi-annual responses which enable operators to support finishing the job in countries such as Senegal or DRC can effectively compromise Article 5 completion. While there has been much progress, and excellent strides forward, much more can and should be done.
- Operators have also increasingly developed operations in complex open-conflict contexts, while humanitarian space has consistently shrunk. In countries like Iraq and Syria, where Handicap International is continuously upgrading its technical capacity in order to tackle a broad variety of contamination – including victim activated improvised landmines - it is paramount to guarantee access to humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable populations. There is an immediate pressing need for large-scale emergency response activities;

we are in a race against time to urgently save lives and restore safety for communities being ripped apart at this very minute.

There is a clear need for donors to continue to:

- Fund transparent partnerships across all operators;
- Support increased national ownership and capacity building; and
- Encourage new strides in innovation and operational efficiency.

Meanwhile, Victim Assistance earmarked funding has been at an all-time low, as global casualties have increased. We cannot forget that victims need support for generations to come. For example, a five year old child who loses a leg will need approximately 50 prosthetic legs throughout their lifetime.

- Beyond medical and rehabilitative care, support with return to school, work and social life is vital if survivors and indirect victims are to have a chance to fully participate once again in all aspects of life.
- Donor countries need to ensure that their bilateral development assistance to landmine and ERW affected countries – the support that is not labelled Victim Assistance - also reaches survivors and indirect victims: the integrated approach to Victim Assistance.

We have, as a Humanitarian Mine Action operator, committed to clear land, deliver Risk Education, and assist victims of these indiscriminate weapons, and President, we would like to thank you for making an appeal to all members to maintain or increase funding to meet the ambition of a world free of landmines in less than a decade.

We would like to also call all States to stay committed to allocate sufficient funding to States that are implementing the Mine Ban Convention.

We also call all States to work towards the universalisation of the Mine Ban Convention.

Mine-free is not victim-free. An integrated approach is the only way forward: ensuring continued support for, and implementation of, specific Victim Assistance efforts, while at the same time contributing to realising Victim Assistance obligations through broader development, human rights, and humanitarian efforts.

There is a powerful symbol outside this building, The Broken Chair, which we should remember as we move forward. HI and sculptor Daniel Berset built it in support of the Mine Ban Convention; later dedicating it in support of the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and last June, extended its meaning to include our fight against the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA).

Our joint task is to complete the commitment that was made 20 years ago.

In doing so, we have to remain daring, adaptable and principled.

Thank you.