



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Intersessional Meetings of the **Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

Statement on Victim Assistance

Geneva, 19 May 2016

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva office, UNMAS

Madam Chair,¹

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprising several United Nations entities² involved in mine action.

From the outset, the United Nations should like to congratulate Mr. Juan Carlos Ruan on his appointment as Director of the Implementation Support Unit, and wishes to renew its full collaboration.

The United Nations welcomes the report and preliminary observations of the Committee on Victim Assistance, as well as the updates by States Parties. The United Nations coincides with the Committee in that establishing time-bound and measurable objectives and compiling relevant information could involve numerous States entities. Needless to say, when applicable, this should involve relevant entities of the United Nations system.

The United Nations actively supports programmes for victims from mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards in at least half of the countries in which it assists in mine action.³ This support includes, in particular, emergency and continuing medical care, social inclusion, livelihoods support and economic integration.

In 2015, UNMAS provided assistance to some 22,000 victims, but every day, the dramatic impact of explosive hazards in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria, demonstrates that mine action, with victim assistance as one of its pillars, must remain at the top of the international agenda.

¹ The Committee on Victim Assistance is chaired by Thailand. The other members are Belgium, Colombia and Senegal.

² The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) (Chair), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer), and the World Bank (Observer).

³ Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism of the United Nations Strategy for Mine Action 2013-2018



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UNICEF support to Colombia has contributed to the strengthening of victims associations. For example, about 134 mine survivors and their families received humanitarian assistance and improved access to health care and physical rehabilitation. Also in Colombia, UNICEF played a key role in the integration of child-related issues in regional and national Victims Fora⁴. In Yemen, despite the escalation of conflict, UNICEF continues to support the government in the scaling up of its unconditional social cash transfer programme for mine and ERW survivors. To further reduce child casualties from mines and ERW, UNICEF also sustained its advocacy efforts on the Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Child Rights Violations.

In Mali, UNMAS is responsible for the recording of explosive hazards incidents and coordinates with UNICEF the identification of victims and their referral to assistance services. From September 2014 to September 2015, also in Mali, UNMAS, in partnership with Handicap International, delivered physical rehabilitation services to about 220 victims and socio-economic support to 160 victims. In 2016, the UNMAS Mali programme will focus on the empowerment of victims of explosive incidents by training some survivors to deliver risk education in communities. This will also facilitate advocacy for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Last year, in South Sudan, about 130 victims of landmines and ERW and persons with disabilities in Yei county benefitted from an UNMAS grant to support the development of business plans through training and start-up grants.

As part of the Development and Mine Action programme of UNDP in Albania, 86 survivors received prosthetic devices at a newly equipped and refurbished repair workshop, and 185 community organizations are currently implementing small-scale development projects.

In Tajikistan, UNDP has supported the expansion of victim assistance services to persons with disabilities, and, in Lao PDR, a non-State Party, UNDP supported the establishment of a UXO Survivor Follow-up Scheme.

Madam Chair,

In his latest report on Assistance in Mine Action, the Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted the decrease in the number of new victims of antipersonnel mines, but he also stressed that “there has been no decline in the number of casualties related

⁴ The Victims Fora included a number of roundtables jointly organized by the Government of Colombia, the United Nations and the National University of Colombia.



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to explosive remnants of war, and the percentage of civilian victims who are children continues to rise.”

The United Nations wishes to reiterate that victim assistance is a mine action pillar that remains grossly underfunded, and urges all States to strengthen their efforts towards the effective implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention, and for advancing the rights and addressing the needs of mine victims, including survivors, and also their immediate families and the affected communities.

Madam Chair,

In order to strengthen its assistance in mine action, the United Nations is in the process of updating its victim assistance policy of 2003. Since then, the normative framework for addressing victim assistance has significantly changed. This update is being conducted in response to the commitment made in the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. It aims to ensure greater coherence, effectiveness and impact of the work of the United Nations in support of victims of mines and ERW. The updated Policy has now reached its final stages of endorsement at the Principals level of the IACG-MA.

Thank you.