



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

**Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Lusaka, 11 September 2013**

Statement on Victim Assistance

**Delivered by Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Director, UNMAS
on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA)**

Madam President,

I am delivering the following statement on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprising the 12 United Nations Departments, Agencies, Funds, and Programmes involved in mine action.

The United Nations is pleased to hear that many States parties and signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions have taken steps to meet their obligations regarding victim assistance and to implement the Vientiane Action Plan.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the nine States parties that have integrated victim assistance into their national disability and health programmes, in particular because seven are currently receiving United Nations support in mine action¹.

Alongside these positive developments, the United Nations remains aware that critical challenges persist.

In supporting victim assistance, the United Nations also strives to ensure that the needs of victims are met in a manner that takes age and gender considerations into account. The United Nations is also determined to strengthen the integration of victim assistance in mine action into broader disability frameworks aimed at promoting and protecting the

¹ Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mozambique.

human rights of persons with disabilities – a need rightly highlighted by the Lusaka Progress Report.

The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 is anchored in a human rights-based approach to mine action, underlining the common goal of international humanitarian law and international human rights law to protect the lives, health and dignity of individuals.

Indeed the United Nations is of the view that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) offers an essential legal framework for ensuring that the fundamental human rights of survivors are at the heart of any mine action programme, calling for an inclusive society in which persons with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with others.

As mentioned by earlier speakers, the United Nations concurs that victims and survivors of explosive hazards do not feel discriminated against. In ensuring a close interaction and meaningful synergy with global frameworks, in particular the CRPD, UNMAS coordination of an updated United Nations Policy through a widely consultative process involving United Nations and non-UN partners, will feature ways of reflecting the specific medical and psychosocial needs of victims.

As you are aware, victim assistance is incorporated as one of the four strategic objectives of the new Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, and evidence of the Organization's commitment to undertake relevant activities so that "comprehensive support is provided by national and international actors to mine and ERW, including cluster munitions, within broader responses to injury and disability."

Accordingly, the United Nations continues to advocate for the adoption and implementation of laws and policies that guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities; mobilization and channelling of resources; focus of efforts to strengthen assistance to victims, taking into account the age and gender sensitivity; and support to ensure the

availability of disaggregated data through injury surveillance and information management systems to strengthen the evidence base necessary for good programming.

In support of this proactive engagement by the United Nations, UNICEF has initiated the development of programme guidance to strengthen age- and gender-sensitive assistance for child victims. Similarly, UNDP is looking into its victim assistance programming. UNMAS has funded in Afghanistan three Afghan technical advisors to assist the Government in elaborating a four year Strategy on National Disability and Physical Rehabilitation (2013-2016).

The United Nations expects the revised UN Policy and the new guidance on child victims to contribute to the effective development of sustainable national frameworks for addressing the age and gender specific needs, and in accordance with the overall framework of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The United Nations remains committed to its support of victim assistance and disability-related programmes in affected countries, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, Eritrea, South Sudan, and others.

The United Nations stands ready to provide assistance to States parties, requesting it, in support of their Article 5 obligations, including in developing policy and strategies to facilitate implementation.

I thank you.