

THE CARTAGENA SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD

Cartagena, Colombia
29 November - 4 December 2009

Assisting the Victims

Statement by the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration (Belgium and Thailand)

30 November 2009

Madame President
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Efforts undertaken by all Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration since the First Review Conference have been based on the principles and understandings reaffirmed in the Review of the Operation and Status of the Convention. In particular, efforts have been based on the logic that the ultimate responsibility of meeting the rights and needs of landmine survivors within a particular state rests with that state. The focus of our efforts has been the States Parties that reported responsibility for significant numbers of landmine survivors.

The work of the Standing Committee has strengthened understanding of the place of victim assistance within the broader context of disability, development and human rights. The shared commitment to victim assistance by States, mine survivors, international agencies, non government organisations and other service providers, has led to the development of services, infrastructure, and policies to address the rights and needs of all women, girls, boys and men with disabilities, regardless of the cause of the disability, in many affected countries.

Progress has been made to varying degrees by most of the relevant States Parties. The Co-Chairs will present to the Review Conference a report on the status of implementation which details some of the key achievements of relevant States Parties in their efforts to achieve the aims of the Nairobi Action Plan in relation to victim assistance.

Madame President, I take this opportunity to highlight two of those achievements.

- Firstly, at the Nairobi Summit, only 3 State Party delegations included a health, rehabilitation, social services or disability rights expert. At the Cartagena Summit, we are pleased to report that there are at least 30 relevant experts on the delegations of 19 States Parties. At least 3 delegations of States Parties include survivors. We are also aware of at least 35 other experts with disabilities, including survivors, participating in the Summit.
- Secondly, as of 28 November, 119 of the 143 State signatories to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are States Parties to the AP Mine Ban Convention, including 17 of the 26 States Parties reporting responsibility for significant numbers of landmine survivors. A total of 62 States Parties to this Convention, including 10 of the relevant States Parties, have ratified the CRPD. The strong adherence to the CRPD by States Parties to this Convention is promising for stronger action on victim assistance in the future, including in the area of international cooperation and assistance.

Madame President, please allow me to pass the floor to my Co-Chair, Belgium, to highlight some of the challenges and possible steps to overcome the challenges facing the States Parties over the next five years.

Madame President, as acknowledged in the Cartagena Declaration, despite great efforts and much progress, we have still not been able to fulfil the promises we as States Parties to the Convention have made to mine victims.

We acknowledge that the most identifiable gains in our victim assistance efforts have been process related, particularly as regards coordination and planning. However, without the full involvement of the appropriate governmental actors and without the application of coherent and realistic strategies, the potential for meaningful, measurable or sustainable difference in the lives of mine victims would be limited.

The most persistent challenge the States Parties face is translating increased understanding on victim assistance into tangible improvements in the quality of daily life of mine victims on the ground.

Madame President, we would suggest that over the next five years efforts should be intensified to ensure:

- mine victims have access to appropriate services and programmes;
- that disability rights become a priority for policy makers;
- that capacities are built at all levels to address disability issues and related services;
- that persons with disabilities, including survivors, are included in decision making processes;
- that accessibility to services and opportunities is improved in rural areas; and,
- that long-term international cooperation and assistance in the provision of financial, technical and other resources is linked to identified needs.

Madame President, efforts to assist the victims requires a long term commitment. Much remains to be done before we reach our aim of the full and effective participation and inclusion of landmine survivors and the families of those killed or injured in the social, economic and political life of their communities. Through implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan there is potential to build on the progress made to fulfil the promise of the Convention to mine victims. The Co-Chairs will present to the Review Conference a set of recommendations to facilitate implementation of the Action Plan in relation to victim assistance.

However, progress calls for a shared commitment. Since 2004 this commitment has been demonstrated by many of our non-governmental partners who have spent hundreds of millions of dollars provided in turn by our donor partners in support of the national efforts of affected State Parties. This no doubt has made a positive difference in the lives of many survivors around the world. Some of these same partners have expressed, quite rightly, that more needs to be done to further improve the quality of life for survivors. We therefore call upon all actors to work together over the next five years to achieve the aims of the Cartagena Action Plan.

In this context, I wish to close by quoting from one of our partners in the pursuit of assisting the victims, Landmine Monitor's Victim Assistance Coordinator. At an event in 2007 marking the tenth anniversary of the Convention, the Landmine Monitor Coordinator stated that "victim assistance is not about competition." We wholeheartedly agree and call upon all interested actors to share a commitment and share a responsibility to ensure that a meaningful difference through the application of the Cartagena Action Plan can be reported to Third Review Conference.