



**Elements for UNMAT interventions during thematic discussions  
Cartagena Summit for a Mine-Free World  
Second Review Conference of States Parties to the APMBC  
(Cartagena, 30 November – 4 December 2009)**

## **Review of the Operation and Status of the Convention**

### **Victim Assistance**

Madame President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentleman. Thank you for this opportunity to address the conference on behalf of the 14 agencies that constitute the UN Mine Action Team.

The United Nations is encouraged by the progress towards achieving a common understanding on victim assistance through the extensive work and consultations since the Nairobi Review Conference, and notes with appreciation the rights-based approach adopted. Victim assistance is not a matter of charity -- a crucial point that now is reinforced for all disabled persons through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The chapter on victim assistance in “Review of the Operation and Status of the Convention” is a good reflection of this progress, as well as on the challenges remaining ahead.

These considerable challenges are illustrated vividly in the report “Voices from the Ground”, prepared by Handicap International. The report, which is based on a survey conducted among survivors in 25 States Parties to the Convention, shows that - despite a better understanding on victim assistance - the lives of survivors has not improved much in the last five years. The report indicates that only 42% of survivors have been surveyed, that only 36% see progress in emergency and continuing medical care, that 28% of them believe that physical rehabilitation has improved since 2005, and that only 21% think that psychological support and social reintegration services have improved. Furthermore, 24% of the surveyed survivors think that their situation in terms of economic reintegration has worsened.

This should be cause for alarm for us all. While significant progress has been achieved in many countries as we have heard today, it is troubling that survivors themselves perceive progress on victim assistance as so minimal.

The UN looks to the outcome of this conference for guidance so that we can better support victims, including their families, and turn this situation around. The UN Mine Action Team acknowledges that mine action merely complements other sectors charged with the responsibility

for public health and the wellbeing of survivors. These actors must remain in the lead. However mine action programmes can supplement this through gathering victim data, supporting coordination, and advocacy for victim assistance at the highest possible level in governmental headquarters, including for budgeting purposes. This should be accomplished without creating parallel systems.

Still, for a number of States Parties in a position to do so, it often is easier to identify sources of funding for victim assistance when addressing the issue from a mine action perspective. Also in many countries, survivors expect support from mine action programmes in terms of victim assistance, especially in situations when health services are scarce or non-existent due to economic instability and/or conflict. Hence, a separate discussion on landmine and ERW victims continues.

The United Nations organizations involved in mine action depend on the States Parties – especially the mine affected states -- for clarity on the scope and extent of the operational support that would best provide for the needs of mine and ERW victims and their families. We also recognize that victim assistance without psychosocial support, social and economic reintegration and the creation of sustainable livelihoods is simply incomplete. To make our collective efforts even more effective, we encourage States Parties to promote synergies between all international instruments relevant to fulfilling the rights of the world's landmine and ERW victims.

The United Nations stands ready to support your efforts and the Cartagena Action Plan. Thank you.