



Belgium

Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines

Oslo, 25 – 29 November 2019

Victim assistance (agenda item 7 d)

Mr. President,

The disturbing increase in the number of mine casualties over the last years reminds us of our joint commitment, enshrined in the Convention, to provide the appropriate care for the victims and to assist in their social and economic reintegration.

After 4 fruitful years in the Victim Assistance Committee, Belgium's mandate ends this week. It has been a great honor for my country to be an active member of this important Committee. We would like to warmly thank all States parties that have shared a seat with us in the Committee those last 4 years for the highly valued work realized together. Special thanks go to the ISU, as well as the ICBL and the ICRC who are observers on the Committee, for their indispensable support to the Committee's work.

The end of our mandate will not diminish our support for the inclusion and the full, equal, and effective participation of mine victims and their representatives in society. We will continue to stress how important it is for all of us to act together, to enable victims to become actors of their own development. Survivors and their families need direct support, but assistance should also be integrated into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks covering the rights of persons with disabilities, health, education, employment and poverty reduction. In this vein, Belgium allocated five million euro to the Humanitarian Impact Bond of the ICRC which will help finance the creation of three rehabilitation and prosthetic centers in Africa (Mali, Nigeria and DRC), that will *inter alia* benefit survivors of explosive remnants of war.

As we mentioned at the Fostering Partnership Conference in Amman earlier this year, victim assistance requires a comprehensive approach to the benefit of the victims and their families, and ultimately to the benefit of their communities as well.

Mr. President,

We welcome the importance attached to victim assistance in the Oslo Action Plan that will allow us to make considerable progress. The action plan contains action items and indicators that will provide States parties with clear guidance on how to fulfill their victim assistance commitments. We invite all States parties that have a considerable amount of victims under their jurisdiction to assign to an official entity the task of overseeing the implementation of the victim assistance commitments contained in the Oslo Action Plan.

Finally, Belgium would encourage the systematic collection of data regarding the type of explosive device implicated in the reported casualties. Although collecting this information can sometimes be difficult, a more systematic approach would help us better understand the characteristics of contamination by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature and thus improve our response and strengthen resilience.