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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
Convention on Cluster Munitions 12th Meeting of States Parties
Statement under agenda item 10 (d) – Victim Assistance

Geneva, 11 September 2024

Delivered by Ms. Christelle Loupforest, OiC, Geneva office, UNMAS

Madam President,¹ Excellencies,

Most casualties from cluster munitions are civilians, with two thirds of them women and children.

Over the past five years, the United Nations has worked to achieve the following outcome: “survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance have access to health and education and participate fully in social and economic life”². Between 2019 and 2023, in countries with UN mine action programmes we observed an increase in the number of countries that have a national disability policy; a victim assistance strategy, framework or plan; a national victim assistance representative or focal point; mapping of victim assistance service providers; referral pathways; mine action standards compliant with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and a victim assistance coordination mechanism. We believe that these measures make victim assistance efforts more sustainable, adequate, effective, and efficient.

The United Nations continued to promote the enhancement of economic opportunities and access to livelihoods for victims of explosive ordnance, survivors, and their families. Overall, the United Nations has positively supported the participation of victims in education and improved accessibility to public services for persons with disabilities.

For example, UNICEF increased its assistance to child victims almost six-fold over the past two years (2022-23) , with 5,706 victims supported annually in a dozen countries. In 2023, child-focused victim assistance interventions included the provision of emergency and continued medical care, assistive devices, livelihood support, cash assistance, mental health and psychosocial support and referrals to health services.

Excellencies,

¹ Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico, Francisca E. Mendez Escobar.

² [UN Mine Action Strategy](#) (2019-2023).



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Together, we must continue to advocate to ensure equal inclusion of victims in employment and equal access to education for men, women, girls, and boys. These gains must be consolidated through continued investments, as victims require long-term, multi-sectoral support to rebuild their lives.

Meeting the needs of victims remains a significant challenge in situations of armed conflict. Victim assistance continues to be one of the least funded pillars of mine action. As a result, there is insufficient capacity to deliver appropriate interventions.

For example, in 2023, the United Nations reached 4,548 people with victim assistance in Afghanistan but was unable to meet the needs of all victims due to funding shortages.

In Lebanon, economic desperation pushes civilians to engage in unsafe practices. The absence of personnel in key ministries such as health, education, social affairs, and labor is significantly delaying the critical assistance needed for these victims.

An analysis by the Mine Action Area of Responsibility indicates that, of the 834 deaths caused by explosive remnants of war in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2023, one-third were caused by cluster munitions. Clearance efforts and victim assistance remain critical priorities in the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic and funding is urgently required to meet the needs of victims.

These are only a few examples. There are many more. The United Nations calls on States Parties to integrate victim assistance into government mine action plans, in line with IMAS 13.10 on victim assistance in mine action, and to fund victim assistance in humanitarian responses and even, if relevant, in geographic areas outside of government control.

Excellencies,

Action 31 of the Lausanne Action Plan stresses the need to collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender, age and disability to understand the priorities of victims and insert this data into a centralised database.



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Mainstreaming gender, age, disability and the diverse needs and experiences of populations in affected communities is a cross-cutting strategic outcome for the United Nations

Over half of the United Nations mine action programmes are supporting national authorities by providing technical assistance and training on how to mainstream gender, age, and disability in mine action.

Women now comprise 40% of the UN mine action workforce in 2023.

As part of mainstreaming gender using the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action, the United Nations Development Programme recently completed a study in the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the intersection of gender, poverty, ethnicity, and disability within the unexploded ordnance sector. This study analyses the systemic inclusion of gender and diversity issues in its policy and programming and proposes a four-year Gender and Diversity Action Plan (2023-2026). We would encourage more such studies that also enhance the understanding of how gender, age and diversity could help improve victim assistance responses.

I thank you for your attention.

END