



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional Meeting
Geneva, 8-9 June 2017

Statement by Ms. Palma D'Ambrosio
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to the Conference on Disarmament

Victim Assistance

Madam Chair,

First of all, I would like to join other delegations in expressing our appreciation for the work conducted by the Committee on Victim Assistance, and for the preliminary observations you have circulated to feed into our discussions.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Madam Chair,

Since its entry into force, the Ottawa Convention has greatly contributed to the creation of more secure living environment for people and communities around the world. In this framework, efforts to assist victims have been central.

On the year of the 20th anniversary since the adoption of the Ottawa Convention, we must celebrate our joint achievements. Yet, we have also to recognize that much still remains to be done, especially in the sector of victim assistance.

Indeed, as we are all aware, victim assistance remains a difficult and complex task to accomplish both for affected Countries and other relevant actors. Also, as the Committee pointed out in its preliminary report, VA programs and activities suffer from inadequate levels of funding.

Madam Chair,

We believe that, in order to address these challenges more effectively, information provided by States Parties through their art. 7 reports is fundamental. We are pleased with the increase in the number of reports submitted in 2017 as compared to the same period last year, as well as with the general improvement in the quality of the information submitted. While being aware that VA reporting can be a challenge for affected States Parties and that this can lead to incomplete or partial reports, we would like to encourage them in fulfilling their information-sharing obligations. Therefore, we fully support the Committee's efforts to promote accurate reporting on all the Victim Assistance aspects embodied in the Maputo Action Plan.

Italy is profoundly aware that “mine-free” does not mean “victim free”, as well as of the centrality of victim assistance efforts for the accomplishment of the goals of our Convention. For this reason, a significant share of our Mine Action funds are devoted to projects targeted at assisting victims of landmines. Italy fulfils its VA obligations also through non-mine action funding, on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination.

Madam Chair,

Also in light of our experience as a donor, we are therefore convinced of the need to adopt an integrated approach to victim assistance. Such an approach aims at ensuring that, on the one hand, specific VA efforts act as a catalyst to advance disability inclusion and, on the other hand, that broader efforts conducted at the national and international levels on issues such as health, disability education, labour, social welfare, and rural development reach mine and other ERW victims amongst overall beneficiaries.

A guidance on an integrated approach to victim assistance was presented at the 6MSP of the Oslo Convention last year and it was discussed also in the framework of the Ottawa Convention during the 15 MSP. We believe that this document represents an invaluable resource and we encourage both potential recipients and donors of victim assistance to make full use of this guidance document.

Mine action projects financed by Italy in the field of victim assistance are already inspired by this approach. For us the protection of mine victims’ rights and security is part and parcel of a broader promotion of the rights of all vulnerable groups, in particular people with disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In this regard, Madam Chair, let me commend you for the meetings you have had with a number of disability and human rights actors in Geneva, with the aim of further defining common lines of action that can be taken to promote joint objectives.

Also, it is Italy’s firm belief that victim assistance must be seen comprehensively, to include both the psycho-physical rehabilitation of affected people, as well as their economic reintegration and adequate social protection.

This stems from the fact that assisting victims should not be seen only as a component of humanitarian action, but also as an integral part of States’ development efforts. For this reason, our assistance programmes target survivors as well as their families and communities. In addition, we devote substantial resources to prevention activities such as mine-risk education.

Madam Chair,

Building on our experience, and also on the work that we are performing as Co-Coordinator on Victim Assistance under the Oslo Convention, we are convinced that VA policies and programmes have to be not only inclusive, comprehensive and integrated, but also sustainable. When designed and implemented according to these criteria, they fully contribute to, and benefit from, the efforts put in place for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

To raise awareness on these topics, and to promote in-depth discussion on the complex web of interrelated issues at stake, we are organizing a side event jointly with UNMAS, during the lunch break today. We look forward to welcoming you in Room C1, at 13.15.

Thank you, Madam Chair