



**Seventh Meeting of the States Parties of the
Convention on Cluster Munitions
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**Statement by Dr. Palma D'Ambrosio
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Victim Assistance

Mr. President,

I am taking the floor also in my national capacity since, within the framework of Mine Action and its five pillars, victim assistance is an issue to which we attach particular importance. We are profoundly aware of the centrality of efforts to assist victims for the accomplishment of the goals of our Convention. Also for this reason, we devote a significant share of our Mine Action funds to projects targeted at assisting victims of cluster munitions, landmines, and other ERW.

The priority of victim assistance becomes even more urgent now, in light of the sharp increase in the number of victims that we are witnessing. According to the *Cluster Munition Monitor 2017*, cluster munition casualties have more than doubled last year compared to 2015. We cannot afford decreasing resources and efforts at a time in which they are most needed.

Mr. President,

Victim assistance lies at the core of humanitarian emergency, but it extends far beyond it. Victims' needs are complex and multifaceted, going much beyond emergency medical care, and our responses must be adapted to such complexity. In a panel discussion we organized last June with UNMAS, we tried to explore the multi-faceted nature of victims' needs, and the implications this has in the design and implementation of VA programmes. We reached the conclusion that VA should be sustainable, integrated, comprehensive and inclusive. Let me briefly elaborate on these concepts.

First, we strongly believe that VA efforts should be seen not only as a component of humanitarian action, but also as an integral part of States' development policies. Indeed, when properly designed and implemented, VA policies and programs fully contribute to, and benefit from, the efforts put in place for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In line with this principle, Italy's assistance programs target survivors as well as their families and communities, and focus not only on their psycho-physical rehabilitation, but also on their socio-economic reintegration. In addition, we devote substantial resources to prevention activities such as mine-risk education.

Second, we are convinced of the need to adopt an integrated approach to VA, as outlined in the Guidance elaborated by Australia and Chile in their capacity as Coordinators on Victim

Assistance in the CCM, with the cooperation of Handicap International, which was launched during last year's Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention.

While encouraging all States Parties to make use of such a valuable instrument, let me just recall now that integrated has a two-fold meaning: on the one hand, resources devoted to victim assistance must adhere to the principle of non-discrimination by benefiting survivors, indirect victims and other persons with disabilities alike. On the other hand, it is essential that assistance to mine and other ERW victims is included in broader development, human rights, and humanitarian programs.

The action of the Italian Development Cooperation is already guided by this approach. For Italy, 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. Consistently with this, Italy fulfills its VA obligations also through non-mine action funding. We also fully subscribe to the principles of the Charter on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, which has been endorsed by over 150 stakeholders, including States, UN agencies and civil society organizations.

Last but not least, let me underline that even sustainable and integrated VA efforts would be impaired if we dismissed a central aspect of victim Assistance, which is the need for gender- and diversity-sensitive policies, which can be tailored to the different needs of the different beneficiaries

With the support of Italy and in collaboration with Handicap International, the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) is in the process of developing new guidelines to disseminate good practices for gender and diversity-sensitive victim assistance among stakeholders in the mine action and broader disability sectors. While we are now in the stage of collecting inputs and feedback from some key stakeholders, we will launch the guidelines at the next meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in Vienna this December.

Mr. President,

Let me now make a few concrete examples of Italy's commitment to victim assistance: yearly, we allocate 500,000 Euros to the ICRC-assisted project on the physical rehabilitation of mine/ERW survivors in Afghanistan, within the framework of the ICRC's "Special Mine Action Appeal". These funds are assigned both to clearance activities and to the provision of assistance and services to ERW victims and other PwDs.

In 2016, we devoted 500,000 EUR to a similar project in Somalia, dedicated to the development of rehabilitation activities in support of victims. To guarantee sustainability, the project is also providing training and capacity-building to medical staff in three rehabilitation centers.

In Jordan as well we have supported the realization of a prosthesis centre for ERW victims and other PwDs, in collaboration with the Italian Section of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

We have also provided a grant to the Organization of American States (OSA) in order to contribute to the OSA-assisted project "Landmine survivor assistance and Socio-economic reinsertion in Colombia", which reflects our integrated approach to victim assistance in a broader development perspective.

For this year we are maintaining the same level of funding for Mine Action Policies, including VA projects, as in 2016. However, we are well aware of the declining trend of available

resources, and are convinced that we should find new and creative approaches to international assistance.

For this reason we are pleased to announce that we have recently joined the ICRC-led “Programme for Humanitarian Impact Investment” which brings together social investors, institutional funders and governments on a “payment for results” funding mechanism over five years, which aims at activating previously untapped finance streams and involving new actors in the implementation of humanitarian initiatives, including in Mine Action.

Thank you.