



**Eighth Meeting of the States Parties of the
Convention on Cluster Munitions
Geneva, 3-5 September 2018**

**Statement by H.E. Amb. Gianfranco Incarnato
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Victim Assistance

Mr. President,

As one of the five pillars of Mine Action, victim assistance plays a key role in accomplishing the goals of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Italy attaches particular importance to efforts to assist victims of landmines and ERW, including cluster munitions, and devotes a significant share of its Mine Action funds to related projects.

We welcome the positive developments in States Parties with art. 5 obligations, as underscored in the report presented by the VA Coordinators. On the other hand, we note with concern that cluster munition victims continue to be recorded, and that several challenges prevent affected States from adequately responding to their needs, including the lack of equipment and resources.

Victim assistance lies at the core of humanitarian emergency, but extends far beyond it. Victims' needs are complex and multifaceted and go beyond emergency medical care. For this reason, they must be addressed through comprehensive responses, and be underpinned by long-term commitments.

Mr. President,

In Italy's view VA, in order to be effective, should be sustainable, integrated, and inclusive. Let me briefly elaborate on these concepts.

First, VA efforts should be seen as a component of humanitarian action, as well as an integral part of States' development policies. When properly designed and implemented, VA policies and programs fully contribute to, and benefit from, efforts towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by assisting victims, their families and communities both in the short-term goals of physical rehabilitation, and the long-term ones of psychological support, social and economic reinsertion.

Second, we are convinced of the need to adopt an integrated approach to VA. On the one hand, this means that resources devoted to victim assistance must adhere to the principle of non-discrimination, benefiting survivors, indirect victims and other persons with disabilities alike. On the other hand, it is essential that assistance to mine and ERW victims is included in broader development, human rights, and humanitarian programs.

Finally, we believe that it is essential for VA efforts to be gender- and diversity-responsive, and thus capable to adequately address the different needs of different beneficiaries. In line with this, Italy supported the development of an operational guidance by the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP), in collaboration with Humanity and Inclusion, aiming to disseminate good practices for gender and diversity-sensitive victim assistance among stakeholders in the mine action and broader disability sectors. The Guidelines were launched last June, and are available in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic on the GMAP website.

The principles outlined so far are at the core of the Italian Development Cooperation's policies and programmes. For Italy, the protection of victims' rights and security is part and parcel of the broader promotion of the rights of all vulnerable groups, in particular persons with disabilities, in line with the CRPD. We also fully subscribe to the principles of the Charter on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, endorsed by over 150 stakeholders, including States, UN agencies and civil society organizations.

Italy fulfills its VA obligations not only through resources specifically devoted to humanitarian demining, but also through non-mine action funding. For example, last year we allocated 3 Million Euro over 3 years to the "Program for Humanitarian Impact Investment", implemented with the International Committee of the Red Cross, other donors and private sector partners. The programme foresees the construction of 3 rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities, including mine victims, in Mali, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

More broadly, Italy's assistance programs target survivors as well as their families and communities, and focus both on their psycho-physical rehabilitation, and their socio-economic reinsertion. We also devote substantial resources to prevention activities such as mine-risk education.

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 mine/ERW victims and other persons with disabilities.

In 2017, we devoted 150,000 Euros to contribute to the ICRC Moveability Foundation activities in the medical and health sector. As in previous years, this helped provide access to emergency medical and psychological support to persons with disabilities as well as mines and ERW victims, in close coordination with local authorities. Similar activities were funded in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a contribution of 250,000 Euros.

Allocation of resources for 2018 is currently being finalized, and we are not yet in a position to provide exact figures. However, we expect that the overall amount of mine action funds for this year, including VA projects, will be equal, or even slightly higher, than in 2017.

Thank you.