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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention: Twenty-second Meeting of the States Parties
(1 - 5 December 2025)

Statement under agenda item 9(a) Assisting the victims

[delivered by Ms. Peggy Hicks, OHCHR, on Wednesday, 3 December]

Madam President¹,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA)².

Excellencies,

Since the Siem Reap-Angkor Review Conference, the humanitarian imperative of victim assistance has only grown more urgent. Yet, the gap between needs and resources has widened alarmingly. Syria has recorded more than 1,500 Explosive Ordnance casualties³ between December 2024 and October 2025 with 581 people killed by explosions and the others gravely injured. Afghanistan, despite major mine action engagement, retains one of the highest explosive ordnance casualty rates in the world with 352 civilian casualties in 2025, two thirds of which were children. In Myanmar more than 350 casualties were recorded in just the first half of 2025.

Behind these numbers are lives profoundly affected, with persons whose rights, safety and bodily integrity have been gravely violated. They face substantial barriers and require support and reparation. Survivors and their families endure stigma, exclusion, and economic

¹ H.E. Ms. ICHIKAWA Tomiko, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, President of the Twenty-second Meeting of the States Parties (22MSP).

² The United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes are: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.

³ International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO)



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hardship. These realities underscore the Action Plan's call for non-discriminatory and comprehensive approaches that must be honoured regardless of the cause of injury, whether from landmines, improvised devices, or other explosive ordnance. Victim assistance obligations are not optional; they are human rights⁴.

Yet today, we face a crisis of resources. According to the Landmine Monitor, only 5% of all mine action funding was allocated to VA in 2024. The same is likely to be true for 2025. Victim assistance programmes have been reduced, paused, or terminated in several affected States Parties. Access to health care remains limited in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza. The humanitarian sector is similarly strained, leaving survivors without stable essential care.

Excellencies,

The Action Plan remain our compass. We commend the development of the VA Checklist, a practical tool for monitoring progress in coming years. However, checklists alone cannot heal wounds or address the wider economic and social impacts of mine contamination. Victim assistance requires political will and predictable funding to translate commitments into care and tangible support.

Despite challenges, the UN is mobilizing innovative partnerships to advance victim assistance:

- In Nigeria, UNMAS and GICHD worked with national partners to develop standard operating procedures in line with the international standard on mine action (IMAS 13.10) enhancing assistance and referrals. Victims are identified during EORE sessions and referred to appropriate service providers.

⁴ Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



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- In South Sudan, UNMAS is developing a survivor referral system for medical care, psychosocial support, and other services.
- UNICEF supports thousands of child survivors with cash transfers, mental health and psychosocial support, assistive devices, medical care and livelihood.
- ATscale, a global partnership hosted by UNOPS, is scaling up access to assistive technology. Project Aegis is pioneering a methodology to forecast long-term rehabilitation and assistive technology costs. This will help States plan sustainably for lifelong support.
- OHCHR will prepare a report mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 58/22 on the impact of anti-personnel mines on the full enjoyment of human rights. We encourage member states and all relevant stakeholders to respond to the call for inputs.

These initiatives reflect the spirit of the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan: multisectoral, data-driven, and survivor-centred.

Excellencies,

Our collective responsibility is clear: to ensure every victim and survivor receives the care and support they are due, and to stand with communities who face the legacies of war every single day. A comprehensive approach to victim assistance must address the full diversity of people affected — including displaced persons, families who have lost loved ones, communities whose livelihoods have been disrupted, persons experiencing trauma, and those facing new barriers to education, employment or social protection as a result of mine contamination. Recognizing this broader reality helps ensure that victim assistance is understood as an inclusive, rights-based response that meets the needs and upholds the dignity of **all** victims.



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Today, 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, there will be celebrations, events and exhibitions around the world – including one at UN HQ in New York on the intersection of mine action and disability. Today and every day, let us reaffirm victim assistance is not only a moral imperative but a legal obligation under the Mine Ban Convention, international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Thank you.