

**Statement by H.E. Geert Muylle, Permanent Representative of Belgium and
Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the APMBC,
to the 20th session of the CRPD**

Geneva, 27 August 2018

Chairperson, members of the Committee, Excellencies, dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that I address you, the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, at this 20th session.

I am honoured to speak in my capacity as Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBC. The Committee on Victim Assistance – whose current membership includes my country Belgium, Croatia, Ecuador and Mozambique – had the honour to address this body twice at its 19th session in February. I thus welcome this renewed opportunity to reinforce the linkages between the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's commitment to assist landmine survivors and the broader efforts to guarantee the human rights of all persons with disabilities. Soon after the entry into force of the Convention in 1999, its State Parties recognized that what they call "victim assistance" lies within the broader contexts of disability, development and human rights.

Moreover, these States Parties, the majority of which are also parties to the CRPD, have formally recognized that their "landmine victim assistance" efforts should promote the development of services, infrastructure, and policies to address the rights and needs of all women, girls, boys, and men with disabilities, regardless of the cause of the disability. Since 2014, one of the priorities of the States Parties has been to integrate victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction.

With that in mind, the Committee on Victim Assistance would like to encourage the Committee on the CRPD to adopt a General Comment on Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. Article 11 provides a great bridge between the CRPD and International Humanitarian Law, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and other humanitarian disarmament conventions. A General Comment in this regard would help to elaborate on the complementarities and differences among these international regimes. In this respect, the Committee on Victim Assistance would be happy to share lessons learned under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as the first humanitarian disarmament convention to recognize the rights of the victims of the weapon in question.

Taking advantage of this opening session today, I would also like to provide you with a short update regarding our victim assistance activities. This year, the Committee on Victim Assistance plans to hold a two-day expert meeting on victim assistance during the 17th Meeting of States Parties in November. The meeting will gather national victim assistance and disability rights experts from landmine-affected countries to take stock of victim assistance efforts in the run up to the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention next year. I hope that the CRPD Committee, the OHCHR and other colleagues will be able to contribute to this meeting.

Also, as you may know, the European Union has adopted a Council Decision in support of the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention being entrusted with its technical implementation. This European Council Decision includes a number of activities concerning Victim Assistance. One of these activities includes the holding of stakeholder dialogues on Victim Assistance. This year the Committee is working with the

ISU to support convening two national victim assistance stakeholder dialogues, one in Iraq and another one in Uganda. These two countries are among a group of 29 States Parties that have reported significant numbers of landmines survivors. The national stakeholder dialogues will bring together representatives of all actors involved in disabilities and victim assistance to promote the implementation of victim assistance including by integrating it into CRPD frameworks. In addition to these activities, the Council Decision also includes the organization of, in 2019, a Global Conference on Victim Assistance which will gather victim assistance and disability experts from affected countries. This Conference will be the occasion for affected States to share best practices on furthering victim assistance and to examine new approaches and initiatives to support our joint efforts. A participation of the CRPD would no doubt add great value to this Global Conference.

Chairperson, Excellencies, dear friends,

The States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention recognize that their assistance to landmine survivors should be carried out in accordance with human rights law and the victim assistance community is aware that the CRPD provides an overarching mechanism which guarantees the rights of all persons with disabilities, including those disabled by landmines. We look forward to pursuing further collaboration with those actors that support the States Parties to the CRPD, particularly the members of the Committee, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the WHO.

I thank you.