



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL
POLICY

Maputo, Mozambique 23-27 June 2014

Statement on Assisting Mine Victim Survivors

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of all of its obligations under the Ottawa Convention including the victim assistance.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans affairs and Social Policy is the competent authority in the Government of the Republic of Serbia in charge of ensuring protection, rights and financial support to disabled civilian veterans, family members of disabled civilian veterans and family members of civilian war victims.

This Ministry has been designated, from November 2012, as the focal point of victim assistance. Until 2012, the health aspect of these matters was dealt with by the Ministry of Health.

We indicate that the process of consultations with the relevant associations was intensified in 2013. The Association of disabled war and peacetime veterans organized a meeting related to prosthetics and orthotics, in May 2013.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans affairs and Social Policy initiated, in December 2013, the setting up of a Government Working Group tasked to deal with questions and problems relating to victims assistance, i.e. implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention).

The Government Working Group will comprise representatives of this Ministry (Sector for protection of veterans and the disabled; Sector for protection of persons with disabilities; Employment Sector; Gender Equality Department), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Arms Control and Military Cooperation Section; International Humanitarian Law Commission), the Ministry of Health ("Batut" Public Health Institute), Ministry of Defence (Military Medical Academy), Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia and Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia. We expect the Working Group to have the necessary authorization and funds that would enable it to undertake all necessary actions for the benefit of the victims. Members of nongovernmental organizations are also expected to participate in the activities of the Working Group.

In 2014, the above Working Group is expected to assure that a clear action plan is developed, that would include measurable and achievable objectives.

The purpose of setting up the Working Group for Victims Assistance is to enable monitoring of the progress made in providing assistance to victims within broader national

plans and legal framework. It is also noted that the Republic of Serbia would consider very helpful and meaningful exchange of experiences and good practices with other states.

The Working Group will certainly do everything in its power in order to support the actions, under the relevant conventions, taken by experts in the areas of health, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, gender equality and mine victims. Because of the lack of information and coordination in the past, it was not possible for victims to participate in the delegations, which will be arranged in the future.

The main problem as to raising the awareness of mine victims regarding their rights and services available to them lay in the flow of information on the inter-sectoral level, as well as along the lines of victims – relevant services. It is further necessary to ensure more intensive media engagement, holding of a larger number of education sessions, conferences, etc. The purpose of setting up the Working Group is the following: 1) coordinated approach by the services; 2) seeking most effective channels for collecting/disseminating information (including those related to database/needs assessment). In this regard, support, good standards, experiences, etc. are also lacking.

All municipalities in Serbia have services for the protection of veterans and the disabled that can be contacted by disabled civilian veterans for specific types of assistance. In remote rural areas, there are social protection services designed to extend quality assistance in the field of social welfare. It is noted that, as soon as the Working Group becomes operational, it will map out all the existing services.

The Serbian Government are financing NGO project activities (assistance) based on open tendering procedures. Through such activities, NGOs will organize training, education, aimed at promotion of men and women capacity building, and at improving the psychological and social situation of disabled war veterans, disabled civilian veterans, etc.

In the Republic of Serbia, the Strategy for promoting the status of persons with disabilities, 2007-2015 is in force. The Strategy recognized their equal rights with those of other disabled persons (the rights of disabled war veterans, peacetime disabled veterans, as well as civilian disabled veterans).

The Republic of Serbia is also implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Under the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of person with disabilities, the status of a person with disabilities is granted to disabled war veterans, peacetime disabled veterans and civilian disabled veterans. This Law is based on the principles governing the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, inclusion of all persons with disabilities, on an equal footing, in all spheres of social life – in accordance with their professional skills.

According to the Law, civilian disabled veterans are entitled to a number of benefits, not just one.

The Law regulating the rights of disabled civilian war veterans (“Official Gazette of R. Serbia”, No. 52 of 17 December 1996) envisages the following entitlements:

- 1.) personal disability allowance;
- 2.) allowance for care and assistance by another person;

- 3.) orthotics allowance;
- 4.) health care and financial benefits related to provision of health care;
- 5.) free and subsidized transport;
- 6.) food and accommodation benefits during travel and stay in places other than one's place of residence, at the request of the relevant authority;
- 7.) monthly financial allowance;
- 8.) compensation for funeral expenses.

According to the information from the database of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans affairs and Social Policy, the number of civilian disabled veterans totals 1,316, out of which 921 men and 395 women. Their average age is 70 for men and 73 for women.

Civilian disabled veterans are disaggregated according to the degree of physical impairment. The rights of this category of people are stipulated by the Law regulating the rights of civilian disabled veterans, enforced from 1 January 1997. This Law ensures that the scope of protection envisaged for civilian disabled veterans is the same as for disabled war veterans whose rights are stipulated in other laws. In this way, the protection of civilian disabled veterans is raised to the highest possible level.

As soon as the Working Group is set up, effort will be made to complement the information and create a database to include also the causes of injuries.

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