



**Statement of Rev. Monsignor John Putzer, Chargé d'affaires, a.i.
Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 2023 Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention -
*Victim Assistance and the Oslo Action Plan: Are we on track in providing mental
health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)*
Geneva, 20 June 2023**

Mr. President,

As this is the first time this Delegation has taken the floor during this meeting, please allow me to place on record the appreciation of the Holy See for the intense preparatory work that you and your team have carried out in order to ensure an outcome-oriented meeting of States Parties next November.

At a time when peace seems ever further to give way to war, conflicts are growing, and stability increasingly put at risk¹, anti-personnel landmines continue to embody a dubious and artificial approach to security. In this regard, victims of anti-personnel landmines, among whom are many children, remain a stark reminder of the cruelty and tragedy of conflicts.²

Respect for the deadlines contracted under the Convention is more than a legal obligation. In particular, the special attention given to the victims of anti-personnel landmines is of paramount importance, as it persists even after the destruction of stockpiles and landmine clearance. As has been said time and time again, regrettably a mine free world does not equal a world free from victims.

Mr. President,

This Delegation welcomes the fact that increased attention is being given to the mental health and psychosocial support of victims which, together with the religious and spiritual accompaniment of victims and their family, have often been overlooked.

For the Holy See, it is fundamental to continue placing the human person at the center and thus guarantee a form of assistance which is integral and takes into account

¹ Cf. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Nations Security Council, 14 June 2023.

² Cf. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the President of the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines, Oslo, 29 November 2019.

the diverse needs of victims. In this regard, spiritual care should accompany medical, psychological, and economic-social assistance. Indeed, spiritual care is an important component of an “[.] integral care that considers the person in his/her entirety, and that unites... the human body, with its psychological, social and spiritual dimension...”³.

In this regard, assistance given to victims must not be limited to the allocation of financial aid alone. It must aim to allow people to take charge of their own integral human development. One of the first States to ratify this Convention, the Holy See – through the institutions of the Catholic Church throughout the world – has since carried out “a campaign to increase awareness in the local Churches of the problem of anti-personnel landmines, circulating relevant information on this serious problem, pressing for an active commitment in this regard and, in addition, asking for prayers for the victims of anti-personnel landmines”⁴

Mr. President,

In the name of human fraternity, of justice and mercy, let us consider assistance from the perspective of the victims themselves. After all, the best way to ensure that their needs - including psychosocial support and spiritual assistance - are addressed properly, and that their rights are upheld, is to listen to them.

Thank you, Mr. President.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the Participants in the 28th International Conference of the Pontifical Council for health Care Workers, 23 November 2013.

⁴ Message of His Holiness John Paul II to the first 1st Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Nairobi, November 2004.