



**Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the
Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 21-25 November 2022.**

SEMA Statement in Victim Assistance Expert Group Meeting

Presented by Abdulkadir Ibrahim Mohamed (VA representative of SEMA)

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

First, let me congratulate you on your election as president of the 20th Meeting of State Parties and also by thanking the H.E. Ambassador, Lazhar SOUALEM of Algeria the chair of the Victim Assistant Committee as well the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of APMBC.

It is a great privilege to represent the Government of Somalia in this crucial meeting to provide an update on the status of the Victim Assistant.

The recurring armed conflict in Somalia for the past three decades has caused a negative impact on the civilian population, exposing them to the danger of mines and unexploded ordnance, ultimately falling victim and bearing lifelong injuries. Somalia is among the group of 30 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention who have reported responsibility for a significant number of survivors of explosive ordnance.

While there is no comprehensive information on the number and situation of persons with disability in Somalia, it is estimated that this number exceeds the global 15% standard, given the long periods of armed conflict, poverty, and excessive use of explosive weapons. Persons with disability and survivors of landmines are often subjected to various forms of abuse and the lack of access to health care and including rehabilitation, which exacerbates the dire situation.

The situation in Somalia has been further complicated by the increasing use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), causing an unprecedented number of casualties among the civilians. On 29 October 2022, just a few days after the 5th anniversary of the worst VBIED attack ever recorded in Africa, another deadly attack killed over 100 and left more than 300 with injuries, in the same spot.

Since January 2021, **74** civilians have been killed or injured by mines and ERW, in **23** different locations across the country. Sadly, **80%** of them were children. Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) similarly inflicted disproportionate harm to civilians, when compared to other explosive ordnance. Over the same period, more than **2,200** civilians living in urban areas and along main supply routes have been killed or maimed in IED incidents.

The situation in Somalia was further exacerbated by the worst drought recorded over the past 40 years, making the Humanitarian situation more complex. A combination of the recurring climate change, armed conflicts, rising food and fuel prices and the impact of COVID-19 are among the main factors behind worsening the inadequacy of victim assistance response.

The ongoing armed conflict currently pits the government and local defense forces against anti-government elements, which has intensified into new areas and is potentially leaving behind fresh unexploded ordnance contamination. A robust Mine Action and Victim Assistance response, combined with Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) would be essential for the perpetually vulnerable population.

During the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action of 2022, Somalia launched the National Action Plan on Victim and Disability Assistance. Whereas this was a successful first step, that is, the first ever inclusive and comprehensive policy and action plan, the implementation of victim assistance programmes remains unfunded, making it difficult to address the needs and rights of the survivors and victims of explosive ordnance, and having no funds to provide rehabilitation services to affected communities. Rehabilitation services in Somalia, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and assistive devices, are estimated to cover only 20 percent of the need. The need to expand rehabilitation services is a priority for the National Mine Action Program and relevant national institutions, as persons with disabilities cited immobility as the first barrier to participation in socioeconomic life.

The Somalia Explosive Management Authority (SEMA) continues to cooperate with the National Disability Agency, a government entity authorized to oversee and coordinate the interventions linked to persons with disability, to ensure landmine survivors are not left behind in government policies, frameworks, and in the plans to meet the wider disability needs in the country.

Thanks to the support provided by GICHD and UNMAS in information management, the National Mine Action Program has made progress in consolidating mine action data, to include victim and accident-related data as fundamental components in effective programming. SEMA will have a functioning and consolidated national database, which will also benefit from a planned transition to IMSMA Core from IMSMA NG, by early

2023. The accuracy of information will allow us to accelerate the hazard reduction, survey, EORE and victim assistance activities in the country, and to keep proper track of progress.

To meet the convention's obligation and national responsibility, Somalia critically needs assistance from the international partners and friends of Somalia, to address the needs of mine survivors and other explosive ordnance victims. This need for support encompasses both financial and technical assistance. Our main priority remains resource mobilization for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Victims and Disability Assistance, strengthening coordination, information sharing and advocacy.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the organizers once again, and to appreciate you all for your meaningful participation.

Thank You.