

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

Opening Statement by Co-Chairs Presented by Rahma Elobied of Sudan

Tuesday 24 April 2007

On behalf of my fellow Co-Chair, Markus Reiterer of Austria, and our Co-Rapporteurs, Phan Peuv of Cambodia and Charlotte Darlow of New Zealand, it is my pleasure to welcome you and to open this meeting of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration.

Together Sudan and Austria illustrate the partnership that is central to the work of this convention. My country, Sudan, is one of the 24 States Parties that have indicated that they hold the responsibility to provide for the well-being of significant numbers – hundreds or thousands, if not tens-of-thousands – of landmine survivors so we understand firsthand the importance of the work that is undertaken by this Standing Committee. Austria is a State Party in a position to provide assistance which it has done extensively.

The primary aim of Austria and Sudan during our term as Co-Chairs is to support further progress in the fulfilment of the commitment that all States Parties made in the *Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009* to enhance our efforts in regard to the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors.

With respect to victim assistance, the *Nairobi Action Plan* aims to “enhance the care, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts” through eleven specific action points. The *Nairobi Action Plan* contains the commitments, particularly on the part of those States Parties with the greatest numbers of survivors, to do their utmost to:

- develop or enhance national mine victim data collection capacities;
- establish and enhance health care services needed to respond to the immediate and ongoing medical needs of mine victims;
- increase national physical rehabilitation capacities;
- develop capacities to meet the psychological and social support needs of mine victims;
- actively support the socio-economic reintegration of mine victims;
- ensure that national legal and policy frameworks effectively address the needs and fundamental human rights of mine victims; and
- ensure that in all victim assistance efforts, emphasis is given to age and gender considerations.

In addition, the *Nairobi Action Plan* contains the commitment of those in a position to do so to provide assistance to States Parties with clearly demonstrated needs, and, the agreement that all States Parties will monitor and promote progress in achieving the victim assistance goals and ensuring the effective participation of mine victims in the work of the Convention

Actions #38 and #39 of the *Nairobi Action Plan* call on States Parties and relevant organizations to continue to ensure effective integration of mine victims in the work of the Convention and an effective contribution in all relevant deliberations by health, rehabilitation and social services professionals. It is encouraging to report that at least 17 delegations include relevant health, rehabilitation and social services professionals. I am personally grateful that the sponsorship programme Donors’ Group had the foresight to earmark funding for this purpose. I am also aware of at least 11 mine survivors who are playing an important role, both here in Geneva and in their countries, in advancing the aims of the Convention.

It is also useful to remind ourselves that in the Final Report of the First Review Conference of the Convention in 2004 States Parties adopted a clear framework to guide their efforts in relation to victim assistance. Four principles are particularly important:

- Firstly, "...the call to assist landmine victims should not lead to victim assistance efforts being undertaken in such a manner as to exclude any person injured or disabled in another manner."
- Secondly, victim assistance "does not require the development of new fields or disciplines but rather calls for ensuring that existing health care and social service systems, rehabilitation programmes and legislative and policy frameworks are adequate to meet the needs of all citizens – including landmine victims."
- Thirdly, "assistance to landmine victims should be viewed as a part of a country's overall public health and social services systems and human rights frameworks;" and,
- Finally, "...providing adequate assistance to landmine survivors must be seen in a broader context of development and underdevelopment...."

This Standing Committee is a valuable informal means for all actors to provide updates on their activities and experiences. In general, we have organized this meeting of the Standing Committee to pursue work in three main areas:

First, we wish to provide an opportunity for clear updates from the 24 States Parties that have indicated that they hold responsibility to provide for the well-being of significant numbers of landmine survivors: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, and Yemen.

To this end, on 16 February we wrote to each of these States Parties encouraging them to make good use of this informal forum to share their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance. And we asked them to be specific....

.....in outlining their progress in ensuring that the victim assistance objectives established are providing a meaningful guide to progress that can be made by the end of 2009,

.....to provide specific examples of how coordination among relevant ministries and other actors works in the processes of establishing victim assistance objectives and developing and/or implementing subsequent national plans,

....we asked them to provide specific examples of progress in achieving victim assistance objectives that are integrated into your broader health care, education and social service systems, rehabilitation programmes and legislative and policy frameworks, and

....several were asked specific questions relevant to the situation in their country.

There will also be an opportunity for updates on victim assistance activities from other States Parties and from States not parties.

Second, we will provide an opportunity for updates by States Parties and others in a position to provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Third, there will an opportunity for an update on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other matters of a thematic nature related to victim assistance.

This meeting is organised differently from the past. At the end of today the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance will adjourn until Friday at 10 am. As Co-Chairs, we have planned an ambitious parallel program for the 17 Victim Assistance Experts during this week. The program is intended to increase the knowledge and build capacity of these experts on all the components of victim assistance through the sharing of experiences. On Friday we will provide you with an update on the activities of these experts.