



THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION

**Statement by Ilene Cohn, United Nations Mine Action Service *UN Mine Action Team*
*Update on support to States Parties in the area of Victim Assistance and Socio-economic
Reintegration***

**On behalf of the UN Mine Action Team to the Inter-sessional Meeting of States
Parties
23-27 April**

Thank you Co-Chairs and good afternoon distinguished delegates, participants and guests.

Madame, the United Nations Mine Action Team supports victim assistance initiatives in the context of national programmes and facilities for all persons with disabilities, and advocates for increased resources and support to persons with disabilities. These are core activities of the UN Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010.

This year we have already witnessed an event of unparalleled significance for mine and explosive remnants of war affected communities. As you are aware, on 30 March the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was opened for signature. Over 80 countries signed the Convention, and one ratified it, in an atmosphere of overwhelming political support for this critical instrument. The United Nations Mine Action Team congratulates all those States Parties we have heard from today that have signed the Convention and we will be making a statement specifically on the Convention during this Standing Committee session on Friday.

We are pleased to report that our programmatic victim assistance efforts increased during the reporting period, and cover a broad spectrum of activities. In some countries, we are still at the early stages of our support in this field – such as in Mauritania, where a victim needs assessment was completed in March 2007 with support from UNDP. The results will feed into the country's priority setting and planning for assistance to landmine survivors. In other countries, our efforts have focused on the legislative and policy framework. Thus, UNICEF supported the Government of Ethiopia to integrate disability into development planning, and to revise national government policies and standards; it is also funding innovative disability programmes. The United Nations is undertaking advocacy, surveillance and data gathering on Afghanistan's estimated 60,000 surviving mine victims; assisting the Afghan Ministry of Public Health in drafting disability guidelines for its basic health package; and developing a strategy for nationalization of victim assistance services. And, in Albania, important progress has been made in strengthening national capacity in both the medical care and rehabilitation, and the socio-economic reintegration of mine victims.

In other countries, we have continued to provide inter-agency support to victim assistance activities. In Lebanon, UNICEF, WHO and UNDP are supporting holistic victim assistance programming – covering vocational training and placement, access to education, physical rehabilitation and psychological support. In Iraq, UNDP, together with the National Mine Action Authority, UNICEF and WHO organized two workshops on mine risk education and victim

assistance, and started the implementation of a pilot victim surveillance project. Particularly noteworthy as well are the mine risk education and victim assistance activities in Uganda - involving a number of international NGOs and monthly coordination meetings with the Government, UN agencies and the NGOs – which are proving to be a successful model of victim assistance support. We note with appreciation the impressive presentation of these initiatives given by Uganda during this session.

And the United Nations Mine Action Team is innovating in this area. In Sudan, 1.6 million dollars from the Human Security Trust Fund are targeted for victim assistance and mine risk education under an integrated UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF programme. The aim of the project is to assist the Sudan, as one of the 24 States Parties with the largest numbers of survivors, in developing national capacity for sustainable victim assistance and socio-economic integration. A national strategy is in the final stages of Government review and adoption. We will remain in close contact with the Chairs of this Standing Committee to ensure communication on this important project as it unfolds. Access to the Human Security Trust Fund reflects an important precedent in the effort to expand the funding base for victim assistance initiatives. We are pleased to report that one quarter of the projects in this year's Portfolio of Mine Action Projects is dedicated to victim assistance programmes - the highest percentage to date.

Building on these successes, the United Nations Mine Action Team pledges to continue its focus on victim assistance programming and resource mobilization, and we reaffirm our commitment to supporting States Parties to meet their obligations under the Treaty in this area.

Thank you.