

**Maximizing the Standing Committee as a vehicle for cooperation and assistance
UNMAS – February 4, 2003**

Madam Co-Chair,

Over the last years, mine action, with its many components, has evolved into a specialty with standards and mechanisms to ensure the highest quality of service.

Victim assistance, an important pillar of mine action, has traditionally been the most difficult component to define for mine action programs. Programs certainly have had the will to do what they could to assist landmine and UXO survivors and many have developed their 'niche' within a complex service environment of local and international organizations, but others were never quite certain what their role should be.

In an attempt to assist mine action programs to better define their role in victim assistance, the United Nations decided to develop a policy, as a framework for mine action programs to enable them to contribute more fully to services for landmine and UXO survivors.

In developing the draft policy, UNMAS consulted with key experts, service organizations, fellow UN agencies and programs, donors and survivors to develop a framework that would harness the contribution that mine action centres and organizations would make to the world of victim assistance.

This policy is rooted in some fundamental principles of human rights, the rights of the disabled, inclusion, capacity-building and reintegration.

It defines the principles upon which UN victim assistance activities should be based, defines the areas of synergy that mine action centres naturally have in the area of victim assistance, clarifies the responsibilities and roles of UN departments and agencies, and identifies the requirements and opportunities for resource mobilization.

The policy is in its final stages of drafting and consultation and we hope to obtain assent from all key partners by the end of February to finally make available a framework that can guide the mine action community in better defining its role in providing assistance to survivors.

Thank you.