

Address

by

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Head of the Swiss Delegation

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance & Socio-Economic Reintegration

Intersessional Standing Committee Meetings

8 May 2006, Geneva

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Excellences, Délégués,

Représentants des Organisations Gouvernementales et non gouvernementales,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

On behalf of Afghanistan and Switzerland we welcome you to the Standing Committee meeting on Victim Assistance and Socio Economic Reintegration of this Intersessionals.

Allow me to underline the precious job done by the participants to this meeting during last year.

In particular let me thank:

-all the signatory States that, with their commitment either are implementing Victim Assistance policies at national level or are financing programmes for the disabled and their community,

-all the UN family and UNMAS as well as,

-the International Organisations and NGOs which are very active in advocacy for the victims.

I also wish to give special thank to ICBL, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the Implementation Support Unit.

The support provided in the last seven years is extremely valuable. However, assistance to mine survivors is still grossly inadequate. An estimated 400,000 victims – children, women and men - across the world struggle to build a life that is more than just survival. States are lagging behind in providing the necessary resources for care, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration.

For this reason Afghanistan and Switzerland are very honoured to have received this mandate to co-chair this Standing Committee for 2006. Aid to victims has always been a priority for Switzerland. In this respect one of the main contributions to create a new vision and strategic framework for bringing aid to the victims took the form of the 1998 Bern Manifesto and the consequent Maputo Strategy that highlight the principle of non discrimination of victims.

In their advocacy efforts and bearing in mind the necessity to reach all the victims of mines, without discrimination, the Co-Chairs will also plead for the promotion of Victims' Assistance programmes in the territories controlled by non-state actors as well in the States which are not Parties to the Convention but experience a considerable problem of mines' victims.

Let me use this opportunity to reiterate that all assistance must be provided by means of an integrated approach making optimal use of synergies both at international and local level.

In conclusion I would like to remind that the intended course of action of the current Co-Chairs is based on the Nairobi Action Plan, with particular emphasis on Articles 29 to 36, and will focus on the needs of the twenty-four State Parties that have reported significant numbers of mines' victims.

The Co-Chairs hope to contribute, albeit in a modest way, to fully address the needs and rights of landmine survivors and help them continue their lives in dignity.

Thank you for your attention and now I give the floor to my colleague, Ambassador Omer.