

**SEVENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON  
THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND  
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

**Geneva, 18-22 September 2006**

**Statement on Afghanistan's experience of inter-ministerial coordination in the  
implementation of victim assistance in the context of the  
Convention and the Nairobi Action Plan**

**Dr. Nadera Hayat Burhani, Deputy Minister of Public Health, Afghanistan**

Madame President  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Afghanistan is pleased to report that it has completed the development of a national Plan of Action for the period 2006 to 2009 to meet the needs of mine victims and other people with disabilities in the country.

The long process to develop this plan began when the former Co-Chairs distributed the Victim Assistance questionnaire in March 2005. The questionnaire was viewed by the Government of Afghanistan as an opportunity to articulate specific, measurable and realistic objectives that would be relevant to the disability sector as a whole, and as an impetus to undertake activity planning and identify capacities to achieve the objectives.

To be honest, this process has not been easy. Afghanistan is facing many challenges and demands on limited resources. But Afghanistan takes seriously its obligations under the Convention which includes to assist mine victims. While developing a plan of action for landmine victim assistance serves to address this obligation, it also serves to address our much broader responsibility to all people with disabilities in Afghanistan.

When Afghanistan became Co-Chair, we saw an opportunity to not only do more to assist mine victims in the country but also to lead by example and show what is possible when there is political will.

Under the leadership of the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Haider Reza, Afghanistan launched a process to revise the information presented in the *Zagreb Progress Report* and increase the level of inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation within the disability sector to develop a national plan of action that would assist mine survivors and other people with disabilities. Several meetings were convened with representatives from the Ministries of Public Health, Martyrs and Disabled, Labour and Social Affairs, Education, and Foreign Affairs, and other key actors.

Throughout 2006, with *process support*, Afghanistan continued to make progress towards developing the plan of action, with the involvement of relevant ministries, international agencies, national organizations, and mine survivors. The UNMACA also played a key role in facilitating the process to review and elaborate on the responses to the questionnaire through consultative work with ministries and implementing agencies. A second draft, which included inputs from key actors, was presented to the States Parties at the intersessional meetings in May 2006.

During the process of developing the plan several challenges emerged that hindered more effective inter-ministerial coordination. I am sure other States in this room will share similar challenges. Several of our ministries lack the capacity to adequately deal with disability issues. While Afghanistan appreciates the contribution of many international advisors within the ministries, more attention is needed on building national capacities. Furthermore, there is a lack of resources to enable qualified individuals to focus on disability issues within the relevant ministries. Afghanistan is currently dependent on international agencies and organizations to implement programs to assist people with disabilities. This can lead to activities being undertaken in an uncoordinated manner and increases the risk of duplication of services in some areas and a lack of services in other areas. One of the most important lessons learnt is that meaningful progress and effective inter-ministerial

coordination is dependent on there being a committed and proactive focal point to lead the process.

Nevertheless, the results of our efforts culminated in the first National Landmine Victim Assistance Workshop in Afghanistan on 6-8 August which was convened and hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul. The workshop brought together some 90 stakeholders, including representatives from the ministries of Public Health, Martyrs, Disabled and Social Affairs, Economy and Labour, Transport, Energy and Water, Public Works, and Foreign Affairs, the Department of Disaster Preparedness, eight international agencies, and around 20 national and international non government organizations, including several that represent people with disabilities. The opening of the workshop was also covered by several representatives of local and international media outlets.

The primary aim of the workshop was to enable the Government of Afghanistan, in collaboration with relevant ministries and other key stakeholders in the disability sector, to develop a plan of action for the period 2006-2009 to address the needs of mine victims and other persons with disabilities. Other objectives were to raise awareness of the rights and needs of people with disabilities in Afghanistan, and to provide the relevant ministries with a clear picture of the benchmarks and their responsibilities.

The workshop was successful in achieving its aims. However, this is not the end of the story. Much work remains to be done to turn the Plan of Action into a reality on the ground. Once fully implemented, the Plan has the potential to improve the quality of daily life of mine survivors and other people with disabilities in Afghanistan. But progress will require the committed and coordinated efforts of all the relevant ministries and key actors in the disability sector.

The plan is seen as a living document and changes will be made as appropriate. Implementation must be monitored and objectives reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the needs of mine victims and other people with disabilities are being met.

Afghanistan is committed to making progress in meeting the aims of the *Nairobi Action Plan* but we cannot do this alone. Afghanistan continues to need the support of the international community, not only to provide financial resources and to implement programs, but to assist in the building of national capacities to ensure the long-term sustainability of activities.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNMACA, UNICEF, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for the financial support that made the workshop possible; UNMACA also provided logistical support to the organization of the workshop. Thanks also to Dr. Flavio Del Ponte and Ms. Patrizia Palmiero from the Swiss Mission in Geneva, for their participation in the workshop, and the ISU for the *process support* that played a key role in making the plan of action a reality.

Thank you.