



**Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

**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**

**Dead Sea, Jordan, 18-22 November 2007**

**Statement by**

**Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

**Consideration of the General Status of Implementation – Assisting the Victims**

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be in Jordan to provide an update on Afghanistan's efforts to achieve the aims of the *Nairobi Action Plan* in relation to victim assistance. I make this presentation on behalf of my colleagues from other relevant ministries and all actors working in the disability sector in Afghanistan. Our continued collaboration is essential if we are to achieve a truly holistic approach to address this important issue.

At the Seventh Meeting of the States Parties in September 2006, Afghanistan presented its 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. This document, known as the Kabul Report, provided relevant ministries with a clear picture of the benchmarks and their responsibilities. The plan of action is being integrated into long term public health and development strategies; it takes into account elements of already developed plans for health care, rehabilitation, social services and the disability sector; and it is intended to benefit all persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. However, the Kabul Report, developed at the First National Workshop in August 2006, is a living document that should be regularly assessed to identify progress in implementing the plan, and also the gaps in the plan and the challenges that remain to ensure that the issue of disability remains high on the agenda in Afghanistan.

This assessment of the Kabul Report was undertaken at the Second National Victim Assistance Workshop from 23-25 October 2007. The outcomes of the Workshop can be considered a success. Participation was strong with representation from 9 government ministries, including: Defence; Education; Foreign Affairs; Information and Culture; Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled; Public Health; Rural Rehabilitation and Development; Transport; and Women's Affairs. Other representatives came from the Parliament, from Embassies, international agencies, national and international non government organisations, including disabled persons organisations, and the media. Over 220 participants registered for the opening session on the first day, and 159 people participated in the working groups to discuss in more detail the various components of victim assistance. The workshop represents only the second time in Afghanistan that Government representatives and Disabled Persons Organizations from around the country have participated in a national disability forum. The workshop highlighted two issues that need further discussion and attention: inclusive education for children with disabilities and community based rehabilitation.

I will take just a few minutes to highlight some progress in the achievement of objectives identified at the workshop.

- Activities to raise awareness and to educate relevant stakeholders, including ministries, government personnel, aid agencies and donors, about the issues of disability is an ongoing process.

- All relevant objectives of the Kabul Report have been integrated into the Afghanistan National Development Strategy action plan for the achievement of the benchmark on disability.
- The Ministry of Public Health has a Disability Task Force and in some provinces disability stakeholders participate in Provincial Health Coordination Meetings.
- Physical rehabilitation guidelines to implement Disability Services within the Ministry of Public Health's Basic Package of Health Services have been developed.
- A national disability support unit within the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled will provide the capacity to monitor disability activities and gather and disseminate practical and technical information on disability.
- A national network of disability resource centers are being built to educate, and provide social services and supports to disabled persons organizations.
- New disability legislation is before Parliament

Progress is being made, but there is much more to be done. It is essential that the relevant government ministries take ownership of the revised plan of action that is being developed as a result of the workshop and adopt the objectives within their own work plans for the coming years. To advance this aim, an inter-ministerial task force on disability has been established and plans to meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and challenges.

Before concluding I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Dr. Haider Reza, Susan Helseth, and the victim assistance team at UNMACA, and the many donors, including Australia, Canada, and the European Commission for their support for the implementation of the plan of action, and as a consequence the disability sector in Afghanistan. It was under the leadership of the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Reza, now Director of UNMACA, that Afghanistan launched the process to increase the level of inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation within the disability sector.

But I would respectfully remind distinguished delegates that assisting persons with disabilities is not a short term endeavor – it will take time and commitment. This is particularly true in Afghanistan where the people continue to suffer from the impact of three decades of armed conflict. The government is committed but it takes time to build the capacities of the ministries to develop and implement appropriate policies and strategies; it takes time to develop the capacities of services providers; and it takes time to build the infrastructure necessary to provide the services. I ask the international community not to lose faith in the absence of immediate results but to continue to support the Government of Afghanistan over the time it will take to build sustainable capacities to address the rights and the enormous needs of persons with disabilities in my country.

There is still much work to be done to fully implement the plan of action and achieve the objectives. My Ministry, and other ministries, are committed to supporting this process and to working with other key actors in the disability sector to ensure that actions are implemented and monitored. Success in this process will serve to address our obligations to mine victims under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, but more importantly, it will also serve to address our much broader responsibility to all persons with disabilities in Afghanistan.

Only by working in collaboration and cooperation – government ministries, international agencies, non governmental organisations, disabled persons organisations, and the donor community – can we do our very best to improve the quality of daily life of persons with disabilities in Afghanistan.