

**Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Reintegration
Geneva, 22 and 23 June 2011**

Intervention on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team

Mister/Madam Co-Chair,¹

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to deliver the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT), comprised of the 14 United Nations departments, programmes, funds and agencies involved in mine action².

As indicated during the 10MSP, the United Nations acknowledges that mine action merely complements other sectors responsible for public health and the welfare of survivors. Actors in those sectors should remain in the lead for victim assistance, which should be integrated into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to disability, health, education, poverty reduction, development and also employment.

This is how national ownership in the context of victim assistance is reflected. National ownership has been also been recently highlighted in the Symposium on Enhancing Cooperation and Assistance in the Pursuit of the Victim Assistance Aims of the AP Mine Ban Convention, held in Tirana, Albania, from 30 May to 1st June 2011. We thank Ambassador Turdiu of Albania, President of the 10MSP, for inviting the United Nations to the Symposium and we congratulate him and his country for this important initiative.

The role of mine action programmes, including those managed or supported by the United Nations, in victim assistance would be to supplement the above-mentioned sector leadership through sex and age victim-disaggregated data, and also to support that national coordination and victim assistance advocacy are placed at the highest national possible level.

Victim assistance is a long-term commitment requiring sustained support reflected in political, social and financial terms, where international, regional and bilateral cooperation and assistance could provide the supplementary support needed.

The following are recent examples of areas in which the mine action and disability-related sectors have interacted in a positive way:

¹ Co-Chairs: Australia and Uganda

² UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

In Afghanistan, MACA continues to support the national disability sector and is currently funding a substantial capacity development programme, including both technical and physical support, to the Afghan Ministries³ and civil society organizations involved with disability. This programme has gradually expanded in line with the recognition that services for persons with disabilities must be available to all regardless of the cause of disability.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, The United Nation Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC), in collaboration with Ministry of Social Affairs, organized the National Victim Assistance Workshop in Kinshasa, on the 19th -21st October 2010. The main outcomes of the workshop were the final revision of the National Victim Assistance Work Plan (2010 – 2012), the creation of common ground for a better understanding of disability related issues and the sharing of ongoing and planned activities and programs. The workshop represented the starting point for the establishment of a solid and effective network to design, implement and monitor activities to support mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities.

The revised Work Plan provides a basic conceptual structure to guide activities and programs to support mines/ERW victims and their families. Those programs were developed within the framework of the overall social welfare, health care and legislation systems for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and vulnerable people in DRC, and with inputs from Ministries, National Focal Point for Mine Action (NFPMA), Mine Action related organizations, UN agencies and mines/ERW victims at both system-based and community-based levels.

In Sudan, the Ministry of Social Affairs, co-chair of the Victim Assistance Working Group and responsible for disability-related issues, has established the High Disability Council (HDC) as a national monitoring tool for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) and UNMAS personnel in Sudan are active members of this council. The HDC organized a series of social, sports and medical events in late 2011, during the course of which a number of events were conducted by the NMAC and the MACC in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs. In light of CRPD, the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources modified the law of labor and increased the percentage of disabled persons that should be employed in the governmental or private sector from 2% to 5% in Khartoum State. The MACC, managed by UNMAS, was also a member in the technical committee of the Government of Sudan who developed the national disability law in light of the CRPD.

In South Sudan, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare serves as the chairing body of the Victim Assistance and Disability Working Group and is committed to the use and implementation of this CRPD in South Sudan and even beyond its borders. As a component of an UNMAS-supported project, this Ministry will introduce the CRPD to all relevant stakeholders and bodies in order to regulate its own law and legislation

³ Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

These examples reflect what the United Nations Mine Action Team has been regularly recommending for a number of years, which is the use of the CRPD as a tool to realize the rights of the survivors and their families. We wish to warmly congratulate Colombia (a country with a considerable number of mine/ERW survivors), Romania and Togo for their accession to the CRPD since the 10MSP.

We take this opportunity to underscore an important component of victim assistance: socioeconomic reintegration, especially on what concerns access to a dignified job. As indicated in the GICHD study, what a person with disability really needs is a job, since only 20% of persons with disabilities are in a satisfactory economic situation. Access to micro-finance programmes could be an excellent way in ensuring effective socioeconomic reintegration of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Mister/Madame Co-Chair,

Victim assistance remains however relevant not only to disability experts at the national level, but to all those here today belonging to the diplomatic, humanitarian, development and mine action communities interested in the effective realization of the promise to survivors and other victims contained in the Convention and in the implementation of the eleven victim assistance-related action points in the Cartagena Action Plan.

We also look forward to an engaging discussion tomorrow on the World Report on Disability 2011 and its relationship to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. The UNMAT welcomes the recently published report by the WHO and World Bank, a member of and observer to, respectively, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action. The report could be of great interest for the mine action and victim assistance communities. We noticed that it highlights a number of aspects regularly discussed by victim assistance experts; there is a whole section on rehabilitation and peer support is underscore in many parts of the text.

Thank you.