

Remarks by  
Ms. Vanvisa Vanno,  
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On Regional Process in the Field of Landmine Victim Assistance  
Before the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance  
28 January, 2002

Madame Co-Chairs,  
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to have an opportunity to make a few remarks before the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance concerning the regional process that have been taking place and Thailand's attempt to enhance the ongoing process on victim assistance

As an active member of the Executive Committee, responsible for the organization of the South East Asia Regional Conference on Victim Assistance. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the regional process.

The South East Asia Regional Conference on Victim Assistance was held in Bangkok during 6-8 November 2001 under the theme of "Moving Forward Together". It gathered 200 participants, including delegation from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam selected from their national workshops, representatives of Myanmar, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and various embassies in Bangkok.

The Regional Conference was organized through an Executive Committee based in Bangkok, the members of which included the Embassy of Switzerland as Chair, the Thailand Mine Action Centre as vice Chair, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the Embassy of Germany, the Embassy of Norway and Handicap International.

The Executive Committee brought together the national focal points from each country to a meeting of an expanded committee in Bangkok prior to the Conference to ensure a consistent approach and presentation from each national delegation and endeavour to make sure that the process of the Regional Conference was owned by the respective countries and perceived not only as an event for Thailand, the host country, but as an opportunity for each country and an event of regional significance.

The Executive Committee consistently viewed the Conference as a technical event that placed the technical actors at the centre and presented the opportunity and framework that would facilitate their exchanges of views and sharing of knowledge and expertise in victim assistance.

The first day of the Regional Conference was the opportunity for each country to present the process and outcomes of their national workshops to the plenary session with a range speakers from each of the countries focussing on their area of specialization in victim assistance.

The background and context of the workshops and the Regional Conference were presented by Handicap International and the context of the Mine Ban Treaty by ICBL.

We were extremely honoured that Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang naradhiwas Rajanagarindra of Thailand presided over the opening ceremony.

The attendance of Her Royal Highness and the Chairing of the Conference by Senator Kraisak Choonhawan, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, were a strong demonstration of the significance the Royal Thai Government placed upon this event and victim assistance activities.

It was really the first occasion in South East Asia that enabled so many technical actors to work together on this issue.

As Mr. Pascal Torres outlined in this presentation on methodology, days 2 and 3 were the opportunity for participants to work together in thematic working groups according to their area of expertise, in groups focussing on the medical, rehabilitation, socio-economic reintegration and institutional support.

The working groups were the essential part of the Conference through which participants were able to fully appreciate the complexities and different approaches of each country.

Through the working groups it became possible to appreciate the range of challenges facing practitioners in each country in this field. There was also an opportunity to develop an understanding of what is working well in each country and the progress being made.

Observers from international organizations, non-governmental organizations also held a parallel forum to discuss common issues and suggest strategies to move forward.

It is my understanding that opportunities will arise this year and the next for continuing this dialogue at the regional level through technical exchanges between the various technical actors from each country.

Most importantly, this follow-up process will include the ongoing work at the national level to develop and prioritize national action plans for victim assistance that can be recommended for further support from respective governments and the international community.

I am also pleased to inform that the Royal Thai Government has been working closely with many international organizations and non-governmental organizations on victim assistance, which is primarily a part of our aspiration to promote and enhance regional cooperation in mine victim assistance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand has been actively involved in this process and I am very confident that we have made a very good beginning that will lead to a greater emphasis placed on victim assistance and to enhance understanding of the issue and what is working well and why for all of those involved in this ongoing process. For those attending this meeting, I would like to suggest all of you to read the report of the national workshops and Regional Conference, which is now available at the information desk, and to meet with any of my colleagues from the region or from Handicap International.

I thank you, Madame Co-Chair.

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