

Standing Committee Meeting on Mine Clearance
Agenda Item: Land Release

Statement by Handicap International
(Bill Howell, Director Mine Action)

We wish to reiterate the support of operator NGOs for the overall Land Release approach. In addition to the activities noted by GICHD and UNMAS, we would like to call attention to an initiative taken by the NGO's Norwegian Peoples Aid, Handicap International, Danish Demining Group and Danish Church Aid to support a five country study by the Survey Action Centre on current experiences in Land Release in those countries. As a part of this study, SAC organised a two day seminar held in Ljubljana, Slovenia in late April 2008. Chaired by Dr. Mohammad Haider Reza, Programme Director of UNMACA, the seminar brought together representatives of UN, Geneva Centre, INGOs and national Mine Action institutions to discuss Land Release experience and progress. In addition, pending issues in the revision or development of relevant chapters of the IMAS were discussed. A report on the SAC Land Release study will be published shortly.

The INGO Mine Action operators already mentioned continue to encourage and accompany their national partners in the adoption and improvement of Land Release. As an example, I can point to a one day seminar on Land Release for the Lebanese Mine Action Centre and Lebanese Armed Forces, sponsored by Handicap International and animated by Mr Bob Eaton of the SAC, held in Beirut on the 24 May 2008. The seminar familiarized the LMAC with the latest developments of Land Release in other countries and encouraged further development of the Lebanese national guidelines for this type of activities.

With this and similar initiatives, in addition to their application of Land Release principles within their field operations, the humanitarian mine action agencies are committed to the development, application and continued improvement of the Land Release approach wherever they are operating.

Geneva, 5 June 2008.