



THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION

**Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Reintegration
Geneva, 3 and 6 June 2008**

**Intervention on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team
Delivered by Gustavo Laurie (UNMAS)**

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair,

In his message on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, just a couple of months ago, the UN Secretary-General said with regard to the Mine Ban Convention, that as States strive to reach the objective of clearing mines within their 10-year deadlines, the threat of new casualties will diminish. He added, “(A)nd yet the challenge of protecting the rights and well-being of the nearly half a million landmine survivors must be addressed for decades to come.”

One of the core activities of the UN Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010 is victim assistance – The United Nations Mine Action Team supports victim assistance initiatives in the context of national programmes and facilities for all persons with disabilities and advocates for increased resources and support to persons with disabilities.

We welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 3 May 2008, shortly one year after its opening for signature. Some 27 countries have ratified this Convention, including 21 States Parties to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty¹, with many others having signed it. The United Nations Mine Action Team congratulates all those States Parties that have signed and/or ratified the Convention, many of which are mine-affected countries with a significant number of survivors from landmines and ERW, and are currently receiving mine action support from the United Nations system.

The United Nations Mine Action Team strongly encourages all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to move quickly towards ratification of the new CRPD. We are using various opportunities to do so, including the above-mentioned Message of the UN Secretary-General. More recently at the 11th International Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and UN Advisers, the UN Mine Action Team organised one full session on victim assistance, during which Survivors Corps presented an advocacy package on the CRPD (already under publication). Also, UNICEF has produced a child-friendly text of the CRPD called “It’s About Ability”, which is available in English, French and Spanish.

¹ Bangladesh, Croatia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gabon, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Jamaica, Jordan, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, San Marino, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain and Tunisia

For States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, the United Nations Mine Action Team also encourages the use of the CRPD as a guidance tool to meeting their victim assistance obligations under Article 6 of the Treaty, but also for the undertaking of the relevant actions contained in the Nairobi Action Plan, notably Action #33. As indicated last year, the CRPD provisions complement the six elements of victim assistance, by showing requirements in areas such as data and statistics, personal mobility and rehabilitation, the rights to an adequate standard of living, to work and to equal recognition before the law, as well as for their integration into national legislation and policies. The CRPD also promotes the active engagement of persons with disabilities in all decisions that affect them.

The Victim assistance programmes themselves could also play an important role in promoting the CRPD. The Victim Assistance Team in Sudan, for example, encouraged the adherence of Sudan to this Convention, and Cambodia, with support from UNICEF, the mine action program translated the text of the Convention into the local language, thus facilitating its future implementation.

From our side, we will continue to provide UN-managed and supported mine action programmes with guidance and tools to assist them in familiarizing themselves with the CRPD, raising awareness among affected communities, assisting States in the ratification process and in supporting the implementation of the Convention. The data collected by programmes on casualty rates should feed into national planning and policies on the rights of persons with disabilities. Data from mine action programmes can also contribute to effective monitoring of the implementation of the Convention.

Mine action centers will be supported to do more - to increase collaboration with and support the institutions and organizations that work on disability issues and to enhance inclusion of landmine survivors, and persons with disabilities in national mine action plans and budgets.

Our programmatic victim assistance efforts increased during the reporting period. For example, Cambodia's national plan of action for victim assistance is in its final stage and would be finalized by October 2008, as heard from the Cambodian delegations this morning. Also, in Afghanistan in October 2007, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, in partnership with the UN supported Mine Action Centre, held the Second National Victim Assistance Workshop. This resulted in the revision of the priorities for the period 2007-9, now with a particular focus on the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. We appreciate the acknowledgements to UN entities assisting in victim assistance made this morning by a number of affected states.

We are pleased to report that 27.15 % of the projects in this year's Portfolio of Mine Action Projects are dedicated to victim assistance programmes - the highest percentage to date.

The United Nations Mine Action Team pledges to continue its focus on victim assistance programming and resource mobilization, and we reaffirm our commitment to supporting States Parties to meet their obligations under the Treaty in this area.

Finally, we wish to congratulate both Co-Chairs for organizing, as was done by the previous Co-Chairs, a parallel programme for victim assistance experts this week.

Thank you.