



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
(MoLSAMD)**

**Presentation of H.E. Mohammad Ghaus Bashiri Deputy Minister
Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the
Standing Committee on Victim Assistance
And Socio-Economic Reintegration
Geneva, 3 June 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Afghanistan as a state party to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention, has accepted all the obligations that joining this legally binding international convention entails, including the responsibility to assist the victims.

Progress is being made. According to data, the number of new landmine and unexploded ordnance casualties has decreased to around 60 documented new casualties each month. While this progress is encouraging, we must never lose sight of the fact that even though new landmine casualties are dropping, Afghanistan still has huge number of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, who are not receiving the assistance that many desperately need.

At the Eighth meeting of the States parties in Jordan, Afghanistan reported on the Second National Victim Assistance Workshop in October which reviewed the Kabul Report: the plan of action developed at the First National Victim Assistance Workshop in 2006. The full workshop report is available.

The principal outcome of the workshop is Afghanistan's National Disability Action Plan for the period 2008 to 2011 which was drafted in a consultative process under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. The Plan aims to address the rights and needs of all persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, within the framework of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the AP Mine Ban Convention. The Plan was based on extensive deliberations at the Second National Workshop, and through inter-ministerial and key

stakeholder consultations between November 2007 and April 2008. The Plan charts a more realistic and achievable way forward for the enhancement and expansion of current services for all people with disabilities, including landmine survivors, and their integration into social, educational and economic opportunities.

The format of Afghanistan's National Disability Action Plan includes an overview of the status, objective elaborated in August 2006 and progress in achieving these objectives, together with revised objectives and actions for the period 2008 to 2011. Objectives were reviewed and where appropriate made less ambitious to take into account the particular challenges faced by the disability sector in Afghanistan, including: the lack of trained personnel and time needed to provide adequate training; the lack of financial resources; and the volatile security situation in parts of the country.

Copies of the plan are available but I will take this opportunity to highlight some of the progress made in achieving our objectives:

- To promote greater understanding of the socio-economic conditions of people with disabilities, one question with 4 components has been included in the 2008 national census questionnaire.
- The World Health Organization is collaborating with Ministry of Public Health to build capacities in emergency and essential surgical and anesthesia procedures at regional and provincial hospitals through the Integrated Management for Emergency and Essential Surgical Care program.
- A national physiotherapy curriculum review by disability stakeholders to increase the 2-year physiotherapy diploma to a 3-year diploma was finalized in 2007 with the commencement of the first course for physiotherapy teachers and physiotherapy clinical supervisors.
- A training package to provide formal training for specialized social workers in Afghanistan was developed.
- The issue of education for children with disability is reflected in Ministry of Education's 5-year National Education Strategic Plan for 2006 to 2010.
- The National Labor Strategies, currently before the Lower House, call for 3 percent of job opportunities and 20 percent of vocational training opportunities to be allocated for persons with disabilities.
- A new National Law for the Rights and Privileges of persons with disabilities is before the Lower House awaiting for approval.

- Afghanistan has not signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but discussions are underway for ratification.

The National Disability Action Plan was developed through an inter-ministerial process with input from all key actors. Disability units have been established in two ministries and some progress has been made on establishing an inter-ministerial disability coordination body to monitor and report on activities of all stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

Afghanistan's National Disability Action Plan serves as an important step in addressing our obligations under the AP Mine Ban Convention; it also served to address our much broader responsibility to all people with disabilities in Afghanistan. The plan 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, education, and the disability sector; it is intended to benefit all persons with disabilities in Afghanistan; and, it provides the relevant ministries with a clearer picture of the benchmarks, their responsibilities, and the way forward.

We appreciate the efforts of the Mine Action Center for Afghanistan, which assisted various ministries in drafting of the plan and to begin implementation. And we especially appreciate the support of some key donors, including Australia, Canada and the European Commission. But it is important to note that assisting persons with disabilities is not a short-term endeavour – it will take time and further efforts. This is particularly true in Afghanistan, where the people continue to suffer from the impact of decades of armed conflict. The government is committed but it will take time to build the capacities and infrastructure, necessary to provide the appropriate services for all persons with disabilities.

Through implementation of the Action Plan, the potential Afghanistan has to improve the quality of daily life of people with disabilities in the country cannot be underestimated. However, full implementation of the plan to address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, will require the long term commitment of all actors in the disability sector together with the mine action community – including UN agencies, the donor community, international and national non-governmental organizations, disabled persons organizations and individuals. By working in collaboration we can achieve much more.

Thank you very much.