

**Inter-sessional meetings
Geneva, 2-6 June 2008**

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance

- 3 June 2008 -

Intervention of Eritrea

Co-chairs, mine action colleagues, respected participants of the Standing Committee meeting,

Firstly, allow me to thank you for having this opportunity to speak in front of you today.

Regarding victim support in Eritrea, as per the commitments entered by the Eritrean Government for Mine Action of which Victim Support is one of the main pillars, the Eritrean Mine Action Authority wants to emphasize the great concern it has for land mine victims and survivors. It is the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare that carries the full and indiscriminate responsibility for persons with disabilities in general: support for victims of landmines and UXOs is thereby included.

Based on this principle, the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare plans and implements the following programs:

- It delivers assistance to mine victims through its CBR programs which coordinates physical and socio-economic rehabilitation through representatives within the community itself.
- During the previous three years, the Ministry has expanded CBR to the highly mine-affected communities and has increased its services to meet the requirements of an integrated approach to mine action.
- Emergency care for accidents has been given top priority in Eritrea. The Ministry of Health had trained health care community workers in mine-affected areas in emergency first aid and are responding effectively to landmine and other traumatic injuries.
- Surgery and additional medical care is in place to rehabilitate survivors and make it possible for an amputee to use prosthesis. The area of orthopedics is one of significant needs. There are three orthopedics workshops in Eritrea. During the past three years, the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare has provided prostheses and orthoses for 2,400 persons with disabilities and of this number, 70% were landmine survivors. The majority of landmines survivors have had access to orthopedic workshops.
- Eritrea's economy is based on farming and animal husbandry. This is one of the reasons why the affirmative action on access to communal land is so important. At present persons with disability including landmines survivors when they reach 18 years of age can access their share of farmland. For able bodied persons in the community, it is 30 years of age and they must be married. This is a significant gain for persons with disabilities.
- During the last three years 3,473 persons with disability – 70% of which were landmine survivors, got loans of 2000USD to set up small scale business.

- Persons with disabilities have legal protection against discrimination and assurance of acceptable level of care and access to services.

Dear Co-chairs, the government of Eritrea is raising awareness on the needs of persons with disabilities. The national policy ensures persons with disabilities to have access to a variety of services and assistance in all programs and this is a means of equalizing opportunities in all spheres of society.

For the future, the Government of Eritrea has elaborated plans to assist all victims or disabled persons in general. They are the following:

- To reduce death and complication by providing training to highly and medium mine-affected communities in emergency care.
- To continue the ongoing training of surgeons in saving limbs, flap closure and other aspects of amputation.
- To develop infrastructure, train and provide emergency equipment and supplies in health centers, in or near highly mine-affected communities.
- To strengthen the ongoing referral system for persons with disabilities.
- To increase the production of upper and lower limb prostheses outhouses and splints.
- To provide landmine survivors with mobility aids that are designed to meet their particular needs and environment.
- To make information available on basic care and repair of orthopedic appliances.
- To put into place database and community structures to monitor the process.
- To decentralize expanded psychological support and counseling services in 90% of the sub-regions.
- To initiate a lobby to pass national legislation that is in line with the International Convention on Persons with Disabilities.
- To monitor the construction companies so that buildings are made accessible throughout the country.
- To conduct a timely survey and develop database information of persons with disabilities including landmine survivors.

Finally, the Government of Eritrea wants to thank the international community for its support of the Eritrean landmine victims.

Thank you for your attention.