

Tuesday, 13 May, 2003

Intervention by Kirsten Young, Landmine Survivors Network on Agenda item:
Maximizing the Standing Committee as a Vehicle for Cooperation and Assistance

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair, Madame Co-Chair and Ladies and Gentlemen for this opportunity to intervene.

This agenda item is entitled “Maximizing the Standing Committee as a Vehicle for Cooperation and Assistance” and it is the view of Landmine Survivors Network, that our work could be maximized, and by that I mean the Victim Assistance community, under the Mine Ban Convention, by considering it in the larger context of the international human rights framework, which provides the core principles underlying disability rights. In this regard, I would like to support the Swedish delegation’s intervention under the agenda item “Assistance and Cooperation”, and the government of Mexico’s intervention under this agenda item.

Even if all rehabilitation efforts were 100% successful and all landmine survivors had access to such rehabilitation, they still face significant barriers to their integration. It is the recognition of this fact that has instigated a global effort for a shift from the medical model of disability to the social model of disability. To make this shift become reality will require a different framework, one that focuses on the responsibilities of both governments and civil society towards vulnerable groups. While the international human rights framework helps in this shift, the documents that create the framework do not specifically state that they protect rights of persons with disabilities, nor is there an international treaty which specifically addresses the rights of person with disabilities. This absence of specific mention, alongside the pervasive lack of public awareness of the

human rights situation of persons with disabilities, results in this population being drastically underserved by the human rights framework. The invisibility of persons with disabilities in national and international dialogue has led to the demand for a convention of the rights of persons with disabilities. So how would a convention on the rights of persons with disabilities help to provide context, content and understanding of what is meant by, and required for, “social and economic reintegration” as called for in article 6.3. of the Mine Ban Convention? Many of the issues faced by mine-injured and other war-injured persons are the same as those facing all people with disabilities. All people with disabilities face the challenge of social reintegration, and may experience psychological effects arising from the stigma and discrimination that can cause feelings of humiliation, rejection by society, and depression about the perceived loss of life opportunities. Mr. Co-Chair, Madame Co-Chair and Ladies and Gentlemen, a convention on the rights of persons with disabilities offers an essential legal tool to ensure that people with disabilities are legally empowered to claim their rights and to challenge the attitudes and practices that prevent the enjoyment of these rights.