

**The General Status of Victim Assistance
in the Context of the Convention and the *Nairobi Action Plan***

**Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on
Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration
(Afghanistan and Switzerland)**

8 May 2006

Article 6.3 of the Convention states that:

“Each State in a position to do so shall provide for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims...”

It is also useful to remind ourselves that the Final Report of the First Review Conference of the Convention provides a clear framework on which to develop our efforts in relation to mine victim assistance. Three statements are particularly relevant:

- “...the call to assist landmine victims should not lead to victim assistance efforts being undertaken in such a manner as to exclude any person injured or disabled in another manner;”
- “Assistance to landmine victims should be viewed as a part of a country’s overall public health and social services systems and human rights frameworks;” and,
- “...providing adequate assistance to landmine survivors must be seen in a broader context of development and underdevelopment....”

At the First Review Conference, it was noted that a greater emphasis must be placed on the fulfillment of the responsibilities to landmine victims by the 24 affected States themselves.

However, maximizing the *Nairobi Action Plan* as a basis for action on victim assistance required a better understanding of what could or should be

achieved by December 2009 by / in these 24 States. In 2005, our predecessors Nicaragua and Norway sent a detailed questionnaire to the 24 States Parties as a basis for action to encourage and support these States Parties in achieving a better understanding of the issues.

Afghanistan and Switzerland are committed to continuing the work of Nicaragua and Norway in support for the establishment of national objectives and plans of action.

Responses to the questionnaires were summarized in a lengthy annex to the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties' *Zagreb Progress Report* and hence have become part of the Convention's permanent record. As a result, there is now a much more solid basis for developing a clearer road map regarding what needs to be done between 2005 and the Second Review Conference and how success pertaining to victim assistance will be measured in 2009.

However, it must be acknowledged that the questionnaire was not an end-product but rather an initial step in a long-term planning and implementation process as it concerns victim assistance. Certain challenges persist in meeting the aims of the *Nairobi Action Plan*:

- The quality of the responses was mixed. Few States Parties actually responded with "SMART" objectives, and some States Parties have failed to spell out what is known or not known about the status of victim assistance;
- In many instances the effort to develop victim assistance objectives has been led by demining officials with little interaction with those responsible for health and social services; and,
- In many instances the preparation of victim assistance objectives has not taken broader national plans into consideration.

Overcoming these challenges and monitoring progress were identified in the *Zagreb Progress Report* as priorities in the period leading to the Seventh

Meeting of the States Parties. It is essential that these 24 States Parties proceed with the more complex task of developing comprehensive national plans to guide the fulfillment of their objectives, ensuring that these plans integrate mine victim assistance into broader health care and social service systems, rehabilitation programmes and legislative and policy frameworks.”

As Co-Chairs, we recognized that the best way to assure progress in overcoming these challenges is to work intensively, on a national basis, with as many of the relevant States Parties as possible while providing some level of support to all 24 of these States Parties. With assistance from the Implementation Support Unit, a victim assistance specialist was recruited with funding provided by Switzerland. The aim is that by the Seventh Meeting of the States Parties:

- those with good objectives will develop good plans;
- those with vague objectives will develop more concrete objectives; and,
- those that had not engaged, or had engaged very little, in the process of developing objectives and plans in 2005 will get engaged.

In addition, the ISU is providing *process support* to as many relevant States Parties as possible. This involves country visits during which one-on-one meetings with officials from relevant ministries take place to raise awareness of the matter and to stimulate inter-ministerial coordination. As well outreach to relevant international and other organizations also takes place to ensure that their efforts in support of the State Party in question are not being duplicated and incorporate mine victim assistance efforts. Mine survivors are also being consulted. In some countries inter-ministerial workshops are planned to bring together all relevant actors to discuss and consolidate improvements on objectives and the development of plans.

The expected outcome of advice and support to the 24 relevant States Parties is an improved capacity in the targeted States Parties to move forward in the

process of setting their own specific objectives and plans of action with a tangible improvement in the services available to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. It is noted that some States Parties have made updates and revisions to their initial response to the questionnaire available to this Standing Committee.

The *Zagreb Progress Report* also reminded us of actions #38 and #39 of the *Nairobi Action Plan* which called on States Parties and relevant organizations to continue to ensure effective integration of mine victims in the work of the Convention and an effective contribution in all relevant deliberations by health, rehabilitation and social services professionals. It is encouraging to report that at least 10 delegations include relevant health, rehabilitation and social services professionals. We acknowledge the support of the Sponsorship Program in facilitating the participation of these experts. I am also aware of at least 11 mine survivors who are playing an important role, both here in Geneva and in their countries, in advancing the aims of the Convention.

And finally, in keeping with the commitment made in the *Nairobi Action Plan* to “monitor and promote progress in the achievement of victim assistance goals,” the Co-Chairs take this opportunity to thank the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance through its member organizations, Standing Tall Australia and Handicap International, for assisting in advancing understanding of various matters concerning victim assistance by producing the report *Victim Assistance in 2005: Overview of the Situation in 24 States Parties*. This is the 2nd annual report in a series to monitor progress in the implementation of the *Nairobi Action Plan* through to 2009. The Co-Chairs also thank the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for funding the production of this very useful report. The report is available on the tables outside this room.