

UNMAS

Cooperation
+ Assistance

AI 4

**Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic
Reintegration¹
Geneva, 26 and 29 May 2009**

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

Mr. Co-Chair,

Mister Co-Chair, thank you for the opportunity to deliver the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT), comprising the 14 United Nations departments, programmes, funds and agencies involved in mine action².

The United Nations Mine Action Team continues to actively support victim assistance initiatives in the context of national programmes and facilities for all persons with disabilities and advocates strongly for increased resources and support to persons with disabilities.

A critically important component to the provisions of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention that address victim assistance and socio-economic reintegration is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Furthermore, the CRPD also promotes the active engagement of persons with disabilities in all decisions that affect them.

Ratified by 36 countries, 32 of which are also States Parties to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention³, the CRPD provides important guidance to States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty on meeting their victim assistance obligations under Article 6, as well as for undertaking the relevant actions contained in the Nairobi Action Plan; in particular Action #33⁴

¹ Co-Chairs: Belgium and Thailand

² UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

³ Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Guinea, Hungary, Italy, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, San Marino, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Tunisia, Uganda and Yemen.

⁴ Ensure that national legal and policy frameworks effectively address the needs and fundamental human rights of mine victims.

The United Nations Mine Action Team congratulates all those States that have ratified the CRPD and encourages those that have not yet done so, in particular those States with a significant number of survivors from landmines and ERW, to ratify the CRPD without delay.

The United Nations Mine Action Team uses a number of opportunities to promote the universalization of the CRPD, including a joint statement on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention.

Another critical avenue for promoting and supporting victim assistance are mine action programmes themselves. In Iraq, for example, a Victim Assistance project in the region of Kurdistan by three NGO implementing partners has completed a physical and socio-economic rehabilitation project with the support of the Government of Japan. The Mine Action Centre in Afghanistan (MACA) not only undertakes victim assistance but is leading the disability sector at the national level. Initiatives of this sort should be encouraged and replicated in other contexts.

Mine action centres are being supported to do more - to increase their collaboration with and support to 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. Some 25% of the projects in this year's Portfolio of Mine Action are dedicated to victim assistance programmes - the second highest percentage to date.

We wish to congratulate the Co-Chairs for organizing, as was done by the Co-Chairs of the previous two years, a parallel programme for victim assistance experts this week.

We also congratulate you for the convening of last weekend's retreat, here in Geneva, bringing together experts in this field. We look forward to receiving the report and findings from the retreat, in particular as regards the discussion on synergies between the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention, Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This is an approach that we very much welcome.

Thank you.