



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

Mr. President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Afghanistan has one of the highest number of mine survivors in the world according to Landmine Monitor and ensuring they and all persons with disabilities in the country have their rights and privileges recognized and respected is vital for our development.

Today, I would like to focus on providing updates on our progress according to the Cartagena Action Plan, specifically actions 23 to 33.

First, I will address the issue of inclusion. Recognizing that inclusion needs to be developed at the earliest stages of life, we are proud of the Inclusive education pilot project, which is now in its third year. Inclusive education is a broad concept that includes accessible, child friendly, mainstreamed and specialized education activities for children with disabilities. The results of this project have been outstanding and we are planning to roll out a larger three year project in the coming year.

Another development in the last year has been the announcement by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled of a 'Decent Work' programme that will include components of persons with disabilities that will enhance economic empowerment of vulnerable groups that include persons with disability by raising the number of employment and or self-employment opportunities.

Mr. President,

Prior to Cartagena, Afghanistan had developed the Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan (ANDAP) to respond to the need of mine victims and other people with disabilities. In the last year, a monitoring matrix was developed for the ANDAP with the support of the Implementation Support Unit. This is currently under discussion for simplification before it is implemented.

The ANDAP is our comprehensive plan of action for addressing the rights and needs of people with disabilities. The president has committed to giving 1.5% of the national budget to support disability, ~~but as yet this has not been legally issued.~~

As for coordination mechanisms, on a monthly basis, the Disability Stakeholders Consultative Group meets under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. This group includes a number of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. The Cartagena Action Plan has been shared in these meetings and translated into the local languages of

Dari and Pashto. In the last year, this has been expanded regionally and there are now groups functioning in the Northern, Eastern and Western regions.

In August of this year, the first Inter-Ministerial Disability Working Committee was held to examine all disability related issues in the country; this is a significant step towards the involvement of multiple ministries in disability issues. It will be a quarterly meeting for high-level representatives of ministries, independent directorates, private sector and civil society.

In terms of data, at present there is no national injury surveillance mechanism, however the Ministry of Public Health intends to develop a system of data collection in order to support disability programming. The Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan, known as MACCA, manages the collation of landmine and explosive remnant of war victims which is collected through implementing partners throughout the country. This is also being integrated into Government structures such as Community Development Council. These reports are regularly published by MACCA and are made available on their website.

Regarding the development of legal frameworks, there has been continued advocacy for the ratification of the national law on the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities. It is hoped that the law will be published in the official gazette at the end of this year. In addition, advocacy continues for ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention of Rights for Persons

with Disabilities. The inter-ministerial committee mentioned earlier will be responsible for reviewing these laws and policies.

As for capacity building and training, there are several capacity building programmes. Training and capacity building activities take place in three key ministries, Education, Health, and Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disability. Training of ministry staff on the rights of persons with disability, accessibility, inclusive education, rehabilitation and physiotherapy referrals is paramount for continued progress within the cross cutting nature of disability. The targets of training are teachers, administrators, doctors, midwives, nurses, engineers, and others. Additionally, specific supports to ministries for their monitoring, reporting, and coordination development activities has begun. The main challenge for expanding any of these activities is simply funding.

Various guidelines and standards have been developed, published and disseminated in the country. For example, a physical accessibility guideline has been developed but its implementation has been challenging. In support of this, a Physical Accessibility conference was held at the beginning of this month to raise awareness among government and other relevant stakeholders and improve application.

Projects for the building of ramps at schools is an ongoing programme implemented by NGOs and awareness raising for inclusive attitudes continues in schools and health care communities.

Other examples of awareness raising efforts include the establishment of the National Disability Federation of Afghanistan – its first meeting was held in October. And later this month, Afghanistan will host the first regional mental health and psychosocial support conference with technical expertise coming from Tajikistan.

Regionally, the 5th South Asia Community Based Rehabilitation Conference was this year held in Afghanistan. Next week (December 7-8) an international conference on mental health and psychosocial supports will take place in Kabul and attended by experts from Tajikistan. This is part of the plan for improved mental health services that include peer support and social supports for persons with disabilities.

In conclusion, Afghanistan has a great challenge in fulfilling the goals of the Ottawa Treaty through provision of services to mine survivors given the number of survivors and the stage of development of public services in a country whose history is mostly defined by conflicts. However, we are committed to ensuring persons with disabilities are able to have their rights and privileges recognized

and realized. Today I have outlined some steps towards this goal and we are committed to continuing on that path until we achieve our goal.

Thank you for your attention.