



**"Transforming vulnerabilities into capacities through  
enhanced local capacity for long-term support to victims"**

Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention  
(Phnom Penh, 27 November – 2 December 2011)

Agenda item 8: General exchange of views

Statement by

Ms. Men Neary Sopheak  
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On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Mr President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) thanks for this opportunity to provide updates of our work in addressing landmines. Today speaking in my capacities both – as the Head of the IFRC Delegation and Acting Secretary General of the Cambodian Red Cross – I am pleased to see that the Convention is meeting in Cambodia, a place where the mine ban movement started two decades ago.

This returning to the source reminds us all, the essence of our commitment toward a mine-free world and importance of long-term engagement toward affected population. The National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies had contributed, through humanitarian diplomacy, to the adoption of the Convention in 1997, and since then have been supporting States, as committed in the Article 6 of the Convention, to provide assistance to people and communities in need. The Movement Strategy on Landmines adopted in 1999 was updated in 2009 to guide the work of all components of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to address landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERWs).

Mr President,

State's determination in putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by landmines has led to the great progress made since 1997. The Red Cross Red Crescent through its wide range of activities and with its auxiliary role in supporting governments to deliver its commitment have seen it clearly. **The political will with an inclusive partnership**, which

brings on board organisations at national and local levels, has demonstrated the joint strength through success stories in the implementation of the Convention in many countries. In this regard, on behalf of the Tonga Red Cross and Tuvalu Red Cross, we wish to express our appreciation to His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan for his visits and tireless effort in engaging stakeholders for the universality and implementation of the Convention. With Tuvalu's accession to the Convention in September, we are pleased to see the total number of the States party to the Convention has now reached 157.

Mr President,

A partnership enabling environment supported by the State is crucial to further the implementation of the Convention. For instance in Colombia, the Colombian Red Cross has participated and provided support to governmental programs in addressing landmines. This partnership has also been enhanced by the Colombian Red Cross' strategic alliance working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Spanish Red Cross and the Spanish Cooperation Agency. With the partnership, the Red Cross activities, for example in the landmine risk education area, have been carried out in 16 departments of Colombia and reached out to 12'000 beneficiaries in 32 affected communities since January 2010.

Another example: In Cambodia, the Red Cross branches at the community level play an active role in the identification of population with physical disabilities living in remote areas. These people in need are referred to Physical Rehabilitation Centres to receive further assistance which has been provided in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, and ICRC.

Mr President,

In about 10 days, it will be the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. On this occasion, I wish to provide some updates on the Red Cross Red Crescent assistance to survivors of landmines and ERWs, who are most often people with disabilities in poor rural areas and part of the most vulnerable groups in country.

Let me take a program run by the Cambodian Red Cross as an example.

Guided by the Strategy for Community Based Mine Action Program (2007-2012), the Cambodian Red Cross' assistance to victims is provided through mine risk reduction with a holistic approach. **Mine risk reduction and victim assistance as a whole promotes safe behaviour and improves the lives of the most vulnerable.** The assistance to victims has been provided with the aim of their economic and social integration into the society. For instance, through micro finance projects of the Cambodian Red Cross, people most in need received loans or funds from the Red Cross branches. With the funding and learning of skills, the beneficiaries were able to start their own businesses, such as grocery shops, farming, animal raising, soya bean production, barber shops, bike repair, TV repair, mushroom planting, food vending, hair dressing, and dress tailoring etc.

The financial support as such has been provided not only to the victims of landmines but also to people living or practicing high-risk activities such as collecting wood and scrap metal in mine contaminated areas, poorest families and people with disabilities. It is rewarding for the Cambodian Red Cross to see that with the loan or fund, **people were able to transform the vulnerabilities into capacities, have their own livelihood choices, change their behaviour, reduce their risks to landmines, and start home-based businesses to support their families.**

Mr President,

The IFRC recognises the importance of local ownership and is thankful to the Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers who have provided support to people and contributed to sustainable development with a bottom-up approach. With this said, we wish to draw attention to the need of **capacity building to increase institution effectiveness for long-term support and service delivery to communities.** For example, for extending micro finance to the mine affected communities as I just mentioned, the Cambodian Red Cross, under its Community Based Mine Action Program, has conducted workshops to enhance the capacity of its Branches Directors, Development Officers and Red Cross Volunteer Team Leaders for the better management of the loan systems in targeted provinces.

Mr President,

**We must remember that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without addressing local vulnerabilities.** The vulnerabilities caused by landmines and other explosive remnants of war can be largely reduced where livelihoods are resilient, local coping capacities are strengthened and where people are able to earn sufficient income to meet their needs. Jointly we can transform vulnerabilities into capacities and you can count on Red Cross Red Crescent's support for the implementation of the Convention at all levels.

In closing, speaking in the name of the Central Committee of the Cambodian Red Cross, particularly Lokchumteav Dr. BUN RANY HUNSEN, the President, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, allow me to take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their long-term support and trust. The funding and support provided, for example by the Red Cross Societies of Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany and Norway, as well as ICRC, over the years to the Community Based Mine action activities has enabled the Cambodian Red Cross to grow and deliver services to people most in need and bring hope to people living in mine-contaminated communities.

Only with partners' continuous support, the Cambodian Red Cross will be able to maintain its assistance to the government and keep up with its commitment to improve the lives of thousands of people affected by landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

I thank you all.

