

Statement
By
H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand
to the United Nations Office in Geneva,
At the 8th Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on
the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction,
on Assisting the Victims (Agenda item 11 (d.))
Dead Sea, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,
18-22 November 2007

Your Royal Highness,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the progress Thailand has made in the area of landmine victim assistance.

First and foremost, I wish to point out that Thailand has adopted a policy of universal access to comprehensive health facilities for all persons with disabilities, including landmine victims.

In regard to landmine casualties, Thailand, through our risk reduction and mine clearance efforts, has been able to significantly reduce the number of casualties to 6 over the past year. And there has been no report of any recent victims. But we recognize that landmine victim assistance is a continuing endeavour in terms of policy priorities and effective action on the ground.

At present, Thailand has in place the Master Plan on Mine Victim Assistance and the Master Plan for Mine Risk Education for the years 2007-2011. Victim assistance is also carried out under the framework of the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act of 1991. I am also pleased to note that Thailand is among the first countries that signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 30 March 2007. Thailand has, furthermore, set up a bureau under the Social Development and Human Security Ministry with specific responsibilities for persons with disabilities. These were significant steps for Thailand. Both the instruments serve as frameworks for policy guidelines and co-ordination among all implementing agencies.

However, having a national plan on mine victim assistance is not an end in itself. The key to its success relies on the fact that it must be embraced as a common agenda and put into practice by all agencies concerned from the national level down to the provincial and community levels. This has been made possible by the strengthened co-ordination and work of the relevant agencies under the Sub-Committee on Landmine Victim Assistance, which reports to the National Committee on Humanitarian Mine Action, chaired personally by our Prime Minister.

Your Royal Highness,

Victim assistance must address both short- and long-term needs of victims, from the moment a person sustains injuries until he/she secures appropriate employment is able to regain a sense of normal livelihood. The assistance needs to be continuous, with constant follow-up to ensure that landmine victims are able to fully integrate into society. In this regard, Thailand has established emergency response teams with trained personnel in more than 2,500 districts within the country. Our goal is to establish these emergency response teams in all districts in Thailand by 2011. Furthermore, all provincial hospitals in Thailand are now able to provide prosthetic limbs, physical therapy and psychological rehabilitation to landmine victims free of charge. Vocational training and job placement service is also available to landmine victims in every province in Thailand.

It should also be noted that our efforts on victim assistance has been assisted to a significant degree by the tireless work of a number of NGO partners, both local and international (the Prosthetic Foundation, under the royal patronage of the late Princess Mother Sri Nagarindhra, Handicap International-Thailand (HI), Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines, the General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation, the Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities International (APPDI), and the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR)). They have worked closely with relevant government agencies, provided prosthetic services and other necessary equipment as well as carried out community-based rehabilitation projects for landmine survivors who live along the border areas.

Your Royal Highness,

While landmine victims and all persons with disabilities have full access to needed services, Thailand recognizes that landmine victims have specific needs. It is necessary to ensure long-term monitoring and follow up, such as physical and psychological rehabilitation and socio-economic re-integration in order for them to overcome their trauma. In doing so, we need to have a good and up-to-date database on landmine survivors. This is our present challenge. Thailand has endeavoured to improve its database and information network so that we can measure our progress and identify further actions needed. In this regard, I am pleased to report that a system of monthly data collection is now in place in all of the main mine-contaminated areas in Thailand.

Your Royal Highness,

As victim assistance is a common challenge faced by some of our neighbouring countries, Thailand would like to encourage more concrete regional efforts on this matter. Based on some of our successful experiences, we are ready to render assistance and cooperation wherever possible to our neighbouring countries, especially in the area of training and in sharing our experiences and best practices, in a spirit of partnership in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention so that all landmine victims are able to lead normal lives with dignity and contribute to the progress of our respective nations.

Thank you.
