

Statement by Stan Brabant (Handicap International Belgium) in name of the ICBL Mine Risk Education Sub-Working Group, on the occasion of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies

Thank you Mr. Co-chair,
Good morning.

I have some good news but also concerns to report back to you this morning. One month ago, LM researchers gathered in Rome for the yearly Global Meeting of the Landmine Monitor. It is still too early to give you a detailed overview of the progress achieved globally in the field of MRE. However, at this stage, we can draw two trends.

A first trend relates to the growing number of new MRE programs. In the last 2 years, new programs have been reported in a number of countries that include: Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, FYR Macedonia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Vietnam and Zambia. An increasing number of MRE programs are now operated by government ministries, community leaders, local NGOs and Red Cross Societies. In addition, needs assessments and planning of future programs have been reported in countries including Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Eritrea, Jordan, Namibia, Somalia and Uzbekistan.

A second trend relates to the quality of MRE programs. Different elements that contribute to a reinforcement of quality in MRE programs are increasingly visible. These elements are : needs assessments, integration with other components of mine action, external evaluations, as well as the creation of international standards for MRE.

Despite these two encouraging trends, urgent needs for more MRE continue to be reported in countries that include Burma, Georgia, India, Iran, Nepal and Somalia (You will have noticed that all 6 are non signatories to the MBT). [The example of Nepal is particularly alarming as our LM researcher there reported 720 new victims of landmines and unexploded devices in the year 2002, while there is only very limited MRE in the country.]

In conclusion, we can say that the progress in MRE is quite encouraging. But a lot of work remains to ensure that all mine-affected communities receive the support they need to reduce the risk to themselves, their property and their environment. Many mine-affected communities are still uncovered by existing MRE programs. I would like therefore to encourage mine-affected States to report on existing and needed MRE, in their Article 7 reports and in this Standing Committee.

Thank you.