

**Standing Committee on Victim Assistance
and Socio-Economic Reintegration**

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Mr Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to address for the first time the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration. Indeed, the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention for Belarus, bound on the 1st of March 2004, makes us examine in a closer way all aspects of the mine problem. In this respect the issue of assistance to the victims of landmines and their social and economic reintegration is quite an important item on the agenda for Belarus.

This issue was thoroughly discussed during the Second Ottawa Convention Implementation Workshop held in Minsk in December last year. The discussions during the Seminar showed that the Republic of Belarus has in its possession a system of medical, social, and economic protection with regard to people with disabilities, including landmine victims. The Workshop also revealed that the main drawback is the lack of precise statistical and other data in this field, and this is what our authorities work on at the moment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since there are no mined areas on the territory of Belarus, the number of landmine victims is presumably minimal. Most of the cases result from unexploded remnants of World Wars, including mines. The

existing state system allows to deal effectively with the problem of assistance and reintegration.

This system includes a network of medical establishments of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence with a number of qualified specialists. The hospitals guarantee medical assistance to mine victims on different stages of treatment.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection ensures medico-social and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities. The main agency in this sphere is the Belarusian Prosthetic Centre in Minsk with its branches throughout the country.

The legal framework of assistance and reintegration includes a number of laws ("On Social Protection of Invalids", "On Veterans", etc). The Government of Belarus enacted a special Support Programme aimed at people who suffered in armed conflicts. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus has a bilateral agreement with the federal ministry of Germany on cooperation in the sphere of professional reintegration of invalids.

At present our main efforts with regard to the Convention are concentrated on defining information and monitoring situation with landmine victim assistance. On a later stage this information could be included in the report under Article 7 of the Ottawa Treaty.

We are looking forward to working together with the States Parties to ensure the best standards in victim assistance and socio-economic reintegration.