

Statement of the Government of JAPAN
at the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic
Reintegration,
17th June, 2005, Geneva

Mme. Co-Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

The recent number of victims due to mines and UXO has been estimated between 15,000 and 20,000 per year. Compared to the estimated number in the 1990's – 26,000 per year – we have made significant strides in mine clearance and mine risk education. On the other hand, the total number of victims has been steadily increasing. Therefore, physical rehabilitation such as supplying artificial limbs, mental health treatment such as treatment for psychological trauma, and capacity building such as vocational training, are much more important.

At the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World last December, Parliamentary Secretary Kawai Stated that in the next 5 years, Japan will continue to provide Mine Action Assistance on a similar scale, with an emphasis on Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, according to the following 3 principles:

- 1. consolidation of peace**
- 2. human security, and**
- 3. close cooperation between governments, NGOs, the private sector, and academia.**

In line with this last principle, Japan has been promoting the research and development of advanced technology to increase the safety and efficiency of de-mining activities.

In order to execute this mine action policy steadily, we instructed our embassies in various mine affected countries to actively seek viable projects.

So far this year Japan provided approximately 645,000USD to assist a rehabilitation centre for victims of landmines and armed conflict in Colombia.

Mme. Co-Chairperson,

Human Security is a policy which was advocated publicly in the UNDP

1994 Human Develop Report as well as a policy which supplements National Security. In today's world where threats to human dignity are crossing borders through globalization, we are protecting and empowering individuals by making them the focus of our assistance. As is outlined in our ODA Charter adopted in August 2003 and expressed in the New Landmine Policy above mentioned, human security is extremely important, and based on the idea of the protection and empowerment of individuals, we will actively provide assistance for landmine victims, as well.

Landmine victims must not have their employment, marriage, and other aspects of their daily lives stolen from them, but rather, they must have the ability to participate socially and economically in their society, with respect and dignity. To that end, Japan has made victim assistance, trauma care, and job training an integral part of our human security assistance.

Mme. Co-Chairperson,

It is said the adult amputees need their prosthetics changed every 3 to 5 years, and children every 6 months to a year. According to the ICRC President Dr. Kellenberger in his speech at the Nairobi Summit, in many countries when a prosthesis no longer fits or is broken survivors have to wait months or even years for support. We must find a way to solve this situation of long waiting periods to walk again for children who want to play, students who have the strong desire to learn, families that have to support themselves both inside and outside their homes.

To this end, as we committed in Ottawa in December 1997, and as we renewed our commitment in Nairobi last December, the international community, with the inclusion of mine affected countries, must continue the struggle to find solutions.

In light of this, I'd like to take this opportunity to call for the following:

First, for the strong promotion of Mine Action, the strong commitment and ownership of mine-affected countries is essential. In Afghanistan, a country suffering tremendously from landmines, we welcome the development in the legal system of social security benefits for disabled persons, include landmine victims. At the same time, as pointed out by some mine affected countries, we have concerns about cases of a lack of good coordination among related domestic

organizations and the relevant government ministries. For example, we have heard that in one country, the ministry responsible for victim assistance has a very weak voice, and maintenance of infrastructure is a priority, so the result is that not enough domestic funding is allocated to victim assistance. This situation should be changed.

Second, victim assistance must be provided for the long haul, and to ensure the sustainability of the activities themselves, projects with a focus on “community building” are needed. The needs of health facilities are as high as ever, so we need to keep the notion of job training and empowerment of victims and other forms of peer-assist activities.

Third, in relation to the previous points, examples of long times taken from the time of a mine accident to arrival at the hospital are many, and access to medical care is a huge problem. As a donor government, while paving roads, constructing bridges, and other infrastructure building are not regarded as victim assistance project per say, but by providing such a broader regional development assistance, we can offer protection and assistance to victims, as well. We must not overlook this viewpoint. Japan considers long-term mine victim assistance as one part of our broader humanitarian and development assistance, and we wish to vigorously continue our endeavors.

Fourth and finally, we should recall the important role of NGOs providing victim assistance. In fact, if we look at Japan’s victim assistance since 1998, 50 percent was provided through domestic and international NGOs. Our government, in order to support good quality assistance that offers concrete benefits at the grass-roots level, is preparing a scheme called, “Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects” for which local and international NGOs, local governments, hospitals, medical centers and other agencies can apply. The role of our embassies in mine affected countries, as with our bilateral and multilateral schemes – no, I would say even more than those – is extremely essential. Therefore, I highly urge you to maintain close communication with our embassies in the field.

Thank you.