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Statement by Cambodia on Victim Assistance
presented to the

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration
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Geneva

Delivered by Mr. Thong Vinal, Executive Director, Disability Action Council,
on behalf of H.E. Sem Sokha, Under Secretary of State,
Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation

Co-Chairs, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to update you on progress in Cambodia in the area of victim assistance. Cambodia has recorded over 63,000 landmine and ERW casualties since 1979. In 2005, 875 new casualties were recorded; in 2006, 450 new casualties were recorded; and in 2007, 352 new casualties were recorded. While this represents a significant reduction, it is still too many new casualties and for the tens of thousands of survivors the assistance available is insufficient to meet their needs.

Persons with disabilities in Cambodia are among the poorest with most living below the poverty line. To date, the majority of disability services have been provided by national and international nongovernmental organizations and other international agencies. However, responsibility for disability issues is officially under the mandate of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation. The Royal Government of Cambodia also established the Disability Action Council in order to better respond to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the country. The CMAA has delegated responsibility for victim assistance to MoSVY and DAC where it is most appropriately addressed.

The Steering Committee for Landmine Victim Assistance was established in 2006 and is co-chaired by MoSVY and CMAA, with secretariat support from the DAC. Cambodia recognizes the importance of inter-ministerial cooperation and collaboration in ensuring a holistic approach to addressing the rights and needs of survivors so in October last year H.E. Sok An, the Deputy Prime Minister, gave approval for all relevant ministries to be represented on the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee is tasked with developing a national plan of action as a first step in addressing Cambodia's obligations under the AP Mine Ban Convention. With financial support from Australia, the DAC is assisting in the development of SMART objectives and an Action Plan in consultation with members of the Steering Committee, other key actors in the disability sector, and mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Cambodia is using the framework adopted by the States Parties at the First Review Conference and the tools developed by the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance to develop the national action plan.

The aim was to present the Action Plan at this meeting. However, developing SMART objectives to address the rights and needs of mine survivors is a challenging task for any country particularly when there are many other competing priorities and ministries lack the capacity to give the issue the attention it deserves. The process has been slower than anticipated but Cambodia is moving in the right direction and taking the time needed to ensure the widest possible consultation and strong sense of national ownership so that when it comes to implementing the Action Plan all stakeholders will be actively engaged in achieving the ultimate aim of improving the daily lives of persons with disabilities in Cambodia.

A workshop for members of the Steering Committee was held on 19-20 March to review objectives and a draft National Action Plan. This workshop was particularly successful as it included the active participation of representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport for the first time. The Steering Committee met again last Friday to review the revised objectives for the period 2008 to 2011.

Once the National Plan of Action is finalized the document will then be submitted to the Prime Minister for adoption. This document will be used as the basis for coordination of all victim assistance activities within the disability sector in order to enhance collaboration and cooperation, identify gaps and avoid duplication of services amongst the stakeholders. The plan will provide a means of strategic direction for the Royal Government of Cambodia, and in particular MoSVY, to gradually take ownership of services provided within the disability sector.

MoSVY is focusing on:

- 1- Basic rights for persons with disabilities
- 2- Development of Self-help Groups
- 3- Promote and strengthen the participation and rights of person with disability
- 4- Extended activities for Vocational Training for person with disabilities
- 5- Ensure sustainability of provincial Rehabilitation Centres.
- 6- The issue of Accessibility to promote and strengthen physical accessibility.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our development partners who have been providing generous support to the disability sector since the very beginning. My special thanks goes to AusAID, USAID, UNICEF, and international NGOs including ICRC, Cambodia Trust, Handicap International, and many others who have provided technical and financial support. Without your continued support no progress will be possible.

To conclude, I will highlight some of the progress that has been made in Cambodia towards addressing the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

- CMVIS has been working on an assessment of the needs of mine/ERW casualties since 2007 but this activity was paused in the middle of 2007. In early 2008, we started to redevelop the form but it is still in draft.
- As there is no accurate information regarding the numbers and categories of persons with disabilities in Cambodia it is the intention of MoSVY and DAC to start the process of collecting such information and to work towards coordinating all information through a central data management system.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between MoSVY and the physical rehabilitation providers was signed on the 2nd June 2008. On the signing of this agreement MoSVY will become responsible for 11 provincial RCs however it is hoped that NGOs will continue to provide financial and technical support. Organisations can also continue to operate centres if they wish. At the present time 46 prosthetic/orthotic technicians (O&P) and 34 physiotherapists are working in the rehabilitation sector.

- MoSVY, UNICEF and the DAC are implementing a project to build the capacity of MoSVY personnel to coordinate a nationwide Community Based Rehabilitation program. MoSVY is developing guidelines for community based rehabilitation in Cambodia and this will be completed within 3 months. CBR programs are currently implemented in 18 provinces.
- MoSVY is currently working on Guidelines on good practice to address the psychosocial needs of mine survivors and their families.
- Vocational skills training programs such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) "Success Replication Program" have expanded and been handed over from the ILO to an NGO in collaboration with MoSVY. Circular for Quality Standard of VTC has been circulated by MoSVY.
- Last October, Cambodia signed the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

And finally,

- In February this year, the Council of Ministers approved Cambodia's first Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This law was first drafted in 2001 so it is a significant step for the Royal Government of Cambodia. The legislation is now before the National Assembly for final adoption.

Cambodia still has a lot of work to do to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place and that the relevant Ministries have the capacity to meet the challenges in addressing the rights and needs of people with disabilities in Cambodia. But through the victim assistance provisions of the AP Mine Ban Convention and guidance from Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance progress is being made to ensure that in the long-term the Royal Government of Cambodia has the capacity and infrastructure to meet its obligations not only to mine survivors but to all people with disabilities in the country.

Thank you