



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

Presented

By

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

AP Mine Ban Convention Meeting of the Standing Committee on Victim
Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

Geneva, May 2009

*Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good afternoon. Since the First Review Conference in 2004, Afghanistan has made significant progress in applying the conclusions on victim assistance adopted there.

Afghanistan's healthcare and social service systems are in many ways still in the reconstruction and development stage as we make an effort to rebuild systems that disintegrated during the conflicts and Taliban dictatorship. However, as we are building these systems, we are keenly aware both of doing so in a manner consistent with the outcomes of the First Review Conference.

As one indicator of this, in 2007, victim assistance was officially integrated into the broader disability sector activities within the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. This ministry has the lead role for advocacy and monitoring of disability services and support. The ministry is committed to working with and for all people with disabilities to raise standards of care and develop new initiatives to ensure persons with disabilities including landmine survivors in Afghanistan receive the respect and opportunities they deserve.

At the request of the Co-Chairs, Afghanistan is in the process of compiling information for its report on the status of victim assistance for the Second Review Conference. This report will include details of the many achievements that have been made since 2005 in achieving our objectives.

One of our most significant achievements was the drafting and adoption of the Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan 2008-2011. The ANDAP was drafted over a three year period in consultation with persons with disability, government

representatives, NGOs, UN and donors from across the country and around the world. The goals within are simple and the ANDAP charts an achievable way forward for the enhancement and expansion of current services for all people with disabilities and their inclusion in social, educational and economic opportunities.

Although once an initiative of the government in support of its obligations to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the ANDAP now signifies an integrated approach to disability services and the rights of persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. This process has helped raise awareness among all sectors of Afghan society to the rights and needs of persons with disability and is paving the way towards the goal of total integration of persons with disability into Afghan society. The ANDAP has exposed gaps in services and will help the Government of Afghanistan understand the challenges and fill those gaps. The ANDAP has also assisted the creation of constructive relationships between the Government and persons with disability closing the gap on misunderstanding and finding common ground.

We have established the process of holding National Disability Workshops to bring together government and civil society actors to discuss employment strategies and the Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan that will help Afghanistan not only meet its obligations to the mine ban treaty, but also those of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. We have had three such workshops so far with the last one in March 2009.

In terms of a legal framework, the National Law for Persons with Disabilities has been approved by Parliament and will soon be signed by the President and become law.

We have also now held two national community based rehabilitation, or CBR, conferences bringing together Government, NGO implementers, and specialists

in CBR to discuss issues of collaboration and expansion of programme activities. The most recent of these was in November 2008. Afghanistan has joined the South East Asia Regional CBR Network and plans to host the next regional conference this year.

The key challenges for Afghanistan lie in finding the funding and mechanisms to ensure national implementation of disability services in all regions of the country, increasing employment and education among persons with disability and ensuring the rights of persons with disability are respected.

As a state, our priorities are:

- Continued implementation and monitoring of the Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan.
- Advocacy for inclusion, awareness of rights issues and the abilities of persons with disability.
- Training and capacity development for implementing agencies to expand their outreach of disability services.
- Develop plans that assist in the coordination of activities, identify gaps and support fundraising activities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of our donors, international partners and my colleagues in the various ministries who have made this progress possible. However, there is still a lot to be done. Steady progress is being made and with the continued support of the international community, we can make a significant improvement to the quality of life of every mine survivor and person with disabilities in Afghanistan. That is our vision.