

**The Dushanbe Workshop on a Mine-Free Central Asia**

**Parallel Programme for Victim Assistance Experts**

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In November this year, the Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – the Cartagena Summit – will take place in Cartagena, Colombia. This makes 2009 a very important year in the life of the Convention as the States Parties will look back on the progress achieved in implementing the Convention since the First Review Conference in 2004 and discuss the priorities and challenges for the period 2010 to 2014. The Summit will also adopt a Cartagena Action Plan which will guide actions the actions of the States Parties to implement the Convention for the next five years.

The Norwegian President-Designate of the Review Conference and the host country, Colombia, have already made it clear that they want the issue of victim assistance to have a high focus at the Summit. Some of the activities that have been planned include a 5 kilometre fun-run through the streets of Cartagena which will raise awareness of the capacities of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. All delegates to the Summit will be invited to participate in the run together with citizens of Cartagena and survivors and other persons with disabilities from around the country and abroad. There will also be a handcraft market where it is hoped that survivors from around the world will be able to sell some of the products that they have made. For Tajikistan, this won't be the first time as I've been told that at a meeting of the States Parties in Zagreb in 2005 there were products from Tajikistan on sale at another market.

There will also be round-tables and other side events that will raise awareness of the rights and needs of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Today in this workshop we have an opportunity to contribute to the outcomes of the Cartagena Summit by discussing the challenges and priorities for this region, and in particular for Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

As mentioned in Sheree's presentation, the ultimate aim of the States Parties is the full and effective participation and inclusion of mine survivors in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities. However, Sheree and Firoz also outlined some of the challenges in achieving this aim. For example, difficulties in access to services; limited inclusion of survivors in planning and implementation processes; services not meeting the needs in terms of quality and quantity; and, lack of opportunities to earn an income.

Are all the challenges that have been mentioned relevant to Afghanistan and Tajikistan? Are there other challenges that should be highlighted? What issues do we face in our countries that limit the potential of people with disability to contribute to the economic development of their families and communities that we need to raise awareness on?

[OPEN THE FLOOR FOR DISCUSSION FOR ABOUT 5 MINUTES]

Thank you. We now have a better sense of our challenges but what should the priorities be for the next five years to ensure that our countries can make progress in overcoming these challenges?

In May, victim assistance experts from around the world meet in Geneva to identify priorities areas at the national and international level that will require the sustained attention of the States Parties in the period 2010 to 2014. Several priorities for victim assistance were identified that could be addressed within a Cartagena Action Plan.

These priorities included:

- Ensuring the inclusion and active participation of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, plans, and programmes;
- Recognising victim assistance as a process in which each component – emergency and continuing medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychological support, and social and economic reintegration – requires specific objectives to ensure high quality standards, availability and accessibility of services;
- Increased accessibility to quality services and actions to overcome physical, social, cultural, economic and political barriers, with a particular focus on rural and remote areas;
- The establishment or strengthening of an inter-sectoral coordination mechanism, led by the ministry or agency with responsibility for disability issues, which includes relevant government ministries and agencies, local authorities, international agencies and NGOs working in the disability sector, persons with disabilities including mine survivors, and their representative organisations. This coordination mechanism should be tasked with the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, plans and legal frameworks that ensure the rights of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities;
- Implementing capacity development and training plans to promote high quality standards and availability of services; and
- International cooperation and assistance, including financial, material and technical support, to build capacities and enhance national ownership.

Are these priorities relevant for Afghanistan and Tajikistan? What other priorities should be highlighted?

[OPEN THE FLOOR FOR DISCUSSION FOR ABOUT 5 MINUTES]

Thank you for the valuable input that has been provided in this brief discussion. We will share the outputs of this workshop with the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration so that the challenges and priorities in Afghanistan and Tajikistan can be taken into account in the preparations for Cartagena and beyond. We will also do our best to ensure that you are made aware of outcomes in Cartagena later this year so that together we can take the actions needed to implement the Cartagena Action Plan at the national level. Together we can make progress in improving the quality of daily life of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities in our countries.