

Ladies and Gentlemen, Organizers of this Conference

Let me to pass you the greetings from His Excellency Hamid Karzai the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and his Excellency Noor Mohammed Qarqeen Minister of the Ministry Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled to the Government and the people of Bangladesh, especially to the participants and organizers of this Conference.

Since Afghanistan has a huge number of persons with disabilities in comparison to the population, the participation by our Afghan delegation to this conference is considered very important. I personally am very happy to attend this conference and learn from your experiences. What we learn from you we will take back to Afghanistan to improve the living situation for persons with disabilities and reduce the daily challenges that persons with disabilities face daily in Afghanistan.

During the last years, there have been good achievements and positive changes in the field of persons with disabilities. Consequently, these initiatives and continuing cooperation by the Government of Afghanistan, Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations has assisted in building awareness and service delivery. Disability issues are included in the Afghanistan Constitution.

Afghanistan's roadmap to peace and development is the Afghanistan Compact which was signed in London 2005. The Afghanistan Compact includes assisting and improving the life of persons with disabilities in order to; reduce poverty, put attention on education opportunities and health and encourage participation of persons with disabilities as an active member of society

Fortunately what is mentioned above has resulted in the following achievements:

1. The National Law for the Rights and Privilege for Persons with Disabilities has been developed and submitted to Parliament for approval, which is expected to be passed in the near future. This draft Law provides affirmative action and gives 3 % of job opportunities to persons with disabilities.
2. Disability is included in the National Labor Strategy which provides affirmative action and gives 20% of the placement in vocational training.
3. Disability indicators are included into Afghanistan National Development Strategy to monitor achievements.
4. There is a plan to conduct a National Disability Survey in Afghanistan and the basic requirements are ready to start the Survey
5. The Disability Resource Training Centers for Persons with Disabilities, Orthopedic Centers and Vocational Training Centers have been constructed and

are working in multiple provinces. This process is constantly expanding and upgrading services.

6. Land and accommodation, including housing, apartments and shelters have been distributed to the most vulnerable persons with disabilities.
7. Improving physical accessibility, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in public places like hospitals and schools has started and will continue.
8. Presently Afghanistan is studying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Although we have had good achievements, we still do have a lot of problems and challenges in the country, like landmines and explosive remnants of war which are constantly increasing to the number of persons with disabilities. Inadequate services to persons with disabilities to respond to their daily needs and inadequate funds allocated to persons with disabilities are the main challenges which become the main concerns of Afghan Government.

Providing rehabilitation services and sustainable livelihoods to persons with disabilities has been included in the various plans and policies but we are still concerned how to prevent landmine accidents that cause disabilities.

We appeal to those producing landmines to join the Mine Ban Treaty and stop killing civilians and increasing disabilities worldwide.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen Afghanistan is a country which needs your support in different sectors in order to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. I would like to request your financial and technical assistance in order to enable us to achieve our objectives in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities