International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

International Committee of the Red Cross
Statement delivered by Bruce Mokaya Orina, Head of Delegation

Addis Ababa, 04th April 2014
Excellencies, Invited guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today’s event gives us an opportunity to take stock of recent progress made in eradicating anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive devices from past conflicts throughout the world. More importantly, it reminds us collectively of the deadly legacy of these weapons and the challenges that lie ahead.

While data on clearance of mines and other explosive remnants of war, stockpile destruction, risk education activities, victim assistance and casualty rates provide proof of undeniable progress in eliminating these weapons and the threats they pose to civilians,…… much hard work remains to be done before the ultimate goal of a world free of landmines and explosive remnants of war can be realized. And it’s not just about clearing the ground of weapons and destroying stockpiles; it is also vital for States to ensure that appropriate, long-term assistance for the victims of these weapons is put in place.

In this regard, I am pleased to report that in 2013 and in 2014, the ICRC and the African Union organized two joint seminars for some 24 African member states affected by the problem of mines in which the member states not only looked at the challenges facing them in meeting their mine –clearance obligations but also looked at the very important issue of victim assistance.

Among the notable recommendations made during the AU-ICRC Joint seminar held last month March 2014 here at the AU were that:

1. **Access to services**: Victims, survivors and other persons with disabilities must have access to the necessary medical and rehabilitative services and programs so as to help them obtain maximum independence and full participation in all aspects of life.

2. **Enhancing intra-Africa Cooperation and assistance**: States and relevant regional and international organizations should seek ways to advance synergy, coordination and the implementation of victim assistance obligations, services and programs.
3. The participants agreed that the support to the efforts of the Member States should be sustained and strengthened for the benefit of victims of weapons-related disabilities. In this regard the role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union Commission (AUC) were highlighted as critical.

4. It was agreed that the workshop should be followed by activities to further the momentum already built to ensure that Member States meet their Victim Assistance obligations, especially in light of the 3rd Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention that will take place 23-27 June 2014 in Maputo, Mozambique, and the upcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By promoting international humanitarian law (IHL) and carrying out extensive activities in conflict-affected areas, the ICRC continues to play an important role in efforts to reduce the impact of mines and Explosive Remnants of War. These efforts included the development and promotion of legal norms, advocacy, preventive activities in the field, surgical assistance and physical rehabilitation programmes.

- In 2013 alone, the ICRC’s Physical Rehabilitation Programme assisted 98 projects in 27 countries and 1 territory. Twelve of these countries were among the 28 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention that have acknowledged responsibility for a significant number of landmine survivors: These 12 States were: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen. The ICRC also assisted network of centres that provided 7,681 prostheses and 1,997 orthoses specifically to mine survivors (out of respective totals of 22,119 and 68,077), along with ensuring access to physiotherapy to 12,519 survivors (out of a total of 134,742 persons receiving physiotherapy). In addition, many survivors received wheelchairs and walking aids.

- In addition, the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled assisted 48 projects in 24 countries, 6 of which were among the 28 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention that have acknowledged responsibility for a significant number of landmine survivors: These States were: El Salvador,
Nicaragua, Peru, **Senegal, Somalia** and Tajikistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action – the ICRC renews its commitment in working jointly with the African Union and other regional and international bodies, in the efforts to lessen, and, ultimately, eliminate both the suffering caused by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive devices from past conflicts and their socio-economic impact.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!