



**Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Director,
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General Debate

ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, “Mine action is critical for effective humanitarian response in conflict and post-conflict settings”.¹

In today’s conflicts, international humanitarian law is too often flagrantly violated; as a result of increasingly deliberate targeting of civilian objects and populations, civilians bear the brunt of a wide variety of deadly explosive hazards left by fighting. Not only do these explosive hazards kill and injure civilians, they impede protection of civilians, block humanitarian assistance, and inhibit stabilization and peacebuilding. This impediment to protection of civilians shall not be overlooked.

Allow me to recall USG O’Brien’s quote of the statement made by a father in conflict-ridden Sana’a in Yemen “ Safety. That’s the only thing we need. Safety and protection. All the rest is not as important.” This is not about the UN, indeed this is about the people.

Because all of us have the professional duty and moral obligation to “restore humanity and leave no one behind” including “reducing people’s humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability”, as the theme of

¹ Message on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Mine Action, 4 April 2016

this year's segment suggests, then our commitment shall take into account the horrendous humanitarian impact of explosive hazards, mines, UXOs, booby-traps, car bombs, suicide vests....

One month after the conclusion of the World Humanitarian Summit, I wish to recall that most commitments made to implementing the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity must integrate humanitarian mine action into strategies, planning and programming, and, most importantly, financing.

Let me briefly explain what I mean by humanitarian mine action - it is not synonymous with demining or even clearance.

Humanitarian mine action first assesses the nature and scope of actual or perceived contamination of roads, agricultural fields, landing pads, residential and urban areas by mines, unexploded ordnance, booby traps and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Communities are interviewed, casualty data gathered and reports of explosive incidents are compiled. This data is used to plan an effective humanitarian response encompassing marking and clearance of explosive hazards, risk awareness, and victim assistance. This planning and programming will address the needs of women, men, girls and boys in all activities.

UNMAS interventions enable coherent and effective humanitarian assistance and stabilization. Internally displaced people and refugees will be able to return to homes and farm-land free of explosive hazards. The planes and trucks of humanitarian workers will not be blown up by an anti-tank mine planted on a landing pad or on a road. Humanitarian assistance will not be impeded by a booby-trapped hospital. National partners and survivors will be empowered through technical training, mentoring and greater access to humanitarian funding mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I've just returned from Iraq where UNMAS is leading and coordinating, together with Iraqi authorities and the international community, an emergency mine action response in retaken areas. Humanitarian mine action was recognized by the stabilization group as a prerequisite to the implementation of stabilization and humanitarian plans, including the return of displaced persons and refugees in highly complex contaminated environments.

A couple of weeks before going to Iraq I was in Syria explaining to my humanitarian colleagues that besieged areas are the most contaminated areas in Syria, therefore the riskiest for the convoys and equally importantly the riskiest for the people they serve.

In conclusion, it is vital that this Humanitarian Affairs Segment translates the WHS commitments and outcome documents into tangible action. Humanitarian mine action must be effectively integrated into humanitarian strategies and planning, supported by coherent humanitarian financing.

I thank you.