

DRAFT

**Opening remarks for Mr. Alexandre Zouev
Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions,
Department of Peace Operations**

**Mine Action Support Group Meeting
24 June 2022, 11:30am-1:30pm, Geneva**

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to attend the Mine Action Support Group meeting today on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. I would like to thank Ambassador Marek of France for chairing this event. I am very pleased to see so many of you in person.

Allow me to convey, on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, my sincere thanks for your participation in the 25th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers - with a special thanks to Switzerland for their engagement and support to this year's event. The strong participation for this year's meeting once again demonstrates the close cooperation between all mine action actors.

I would also like to express my gratitude for your continued support to the mine action sector through various channels – through direct contributions made to the voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine action, bi-lateral arrangements with implementers, in-kind contributions of expertise (particularly to the

UNMAS IED threat mitigation team) as well as through continued advocacy and engagement.

In relation to United Nations mine action activities, I want to acknowledge the commitment and dedication demonstrated over the last year to continue to deliver through ongoing global uncertainty, working towards the vision of a world free of explosive threats.

At the same time as this Mine Action Support Group Meeting, there is a side event going on where the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action is presenting data from the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023, to demonstrate the collective achievements in 2021. I would like to share some key points from this strategy:

- Demonstrating its **relevance across the humanitarian development peace and security nexus**, in 2021, mine action was represented in 15 national United Nations-supported development frameworks, 18 humanitarian response plans, as well as in the mandates of nine peacekeeping and three special political missions.
- In 2021, over **300 km² of contaminated land, 190 km of roads, and 725 infrastructure points** needed by civilians **were cleared of mines and Explosive Remnants of War and returned to communities safe to use.**
- Almost **2.5 million beneficiaries were reached by United Nations-funded face-to-face explosive ordnance risk education** in 2021, and we observed a positive increase in appointments of national focal points as well as integration of explosive ordnance risk education into school curriculum.
- More countries and territories with United Nations mine action presence now have a **national disability policy**, and more national authorities in 2021 reported having a **national representative for victims of explosive ordnance accidents.**

- More countries and territories reported having a national **mine action strategy and more have established a national accreditation system** than in 2020.
- Further, more countries have a **national gender strategy for mine action** and more countries are disaggregating mine action data by age and gender; demonstrating that the commitment to the inclusion and mainstreaming of gender considerations across mine action operations is bearing fruit.

These reports are impressive, and we did not achieve these numbers alone. Partnerships and innovation make us stronger. I was encouraged to recently learn of an explosive ordnance risk education workshop co-led by UNICEF and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, supported by the Swiss Armed Forces, which allowed implementers to take stock of tools used successfully in digital programming and to identify opportunities for their application in mine action. We look forward to further collaborations such as this, to strengthen mine action. We remain grateful to our implementing partners, national and local authorities, our donors and the affected and engaged communities who make our work possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of your ongoing support and engagement within the United Nations system through your Missions in New York. This support helps us ensure appropriate mine action components in United Nations peace operations, which are essential for ensuring the protection of civilians as well as the safety and security of peacekeepers. Your support is critical, especially when resources are diminishing at a time that the explosive threats to civilians and peacekeepers are increasing and becoming more complex. We should not forget that 75 per cent

of all mine action funding for South Sudan comes from the peacekeeping budget and is essential for making progress in that country.

With this great challenge in mind, allow me to propose the idea of a mine action group of friends, like those which support other components in my office - DDR, SSR, Police, and Justice and Corrections. Such a group would promote mine action at the United Nations through advocacy, including in the Fifth Committee, the C-34 and others. I would hope that other key players in mine action, such as Police and Troop Contributing Countries as well as affected states, would also join such a group. I believe this would have a positive impact on progressing important mine action issues.

I will conclude with a reminder that although progress is being made, there is still a long way to go in relation to mine action. With emerging new conflicts as well as ongoing conflicts globally, the threats continue to grow on a daily basis. Therefore, we cannot lose focus and must increase our engagement and commitment to mine action, something that is so fundamental to humanitarian assistance, everlasting peace and security and sustainable development.

Thank you.