**Good morning** Excellencies, colleagues, friends,

**Let me start by thanking Germany** for their leadership in **chairing** the Mine Action Support Group and their **unwavering commitment** to the mine action sector, including their hosting of the 2021 Directors meeting.

I also want to **welcome France as the incoming chair in 2022**, on behalf of the IACG, I look **forward to continuing** our strong working relationship with the MASG under your leadership.

**And** I want to **thank all donors and partners** represented here; without your **flexibility and support the sector** would not have been able to deliver during the pandemic as well as we did. We will **consolidate our innovations** - such as risk education campaigns through social media and text messaging – and **maintain our momentum** as we emerge into the new normal.

**[Where are we now]**

**Taking stock** of our current situation, I want to **refer to the report of the Secretary-General** on mine action, which I presented to the Fourth Committee last Friday.

There is some good news: **casualties caused by explosive ordnance incidents dropped** by 35% between 2020 and 2019\(^1\), though I caution that this is most **likely linked to COVID-19-related mobility and data-collection restrictions**. Indications in the **first quarter of 2021** are that casualty rates were **similar to those seen in pre-pandemic years**.

We see the value of **sustained clearance efforts**, such as in **Lao PDR**, where casualty rates **dropped by more than 70% between 2010 and 2020**. We also saw the **first Explosive Ordnance assessment team** deployed in **Rural Damascus** in July of last year, paving the way – I hope – for future clearance operations.

**In 2019 and 2020 UN MA reached 7.3 million people were reached with risk education, through virtual and face-to-face interventions** while **UNICEF managed to train nearly 19,000 professionals** resulting in a **42% increase in risk education messengers** compared to 2019. To highlight just one country example, the **social media campaign ‘safe step’ in Iraq reached more than 1 million people**.

Through the support of the UN Whole-of system IED task force an **IED coordination body in Yemen** under the leadership of **UNDP** was created in 2021. Collectively, the efforts of its members contributed to a **reduction of civilian IED casualties in Hadramawt, Shabwah and Taiz from 231 in 2019 to 125 in 2020**.

Yet, many **challenges remain**. Some sixty states and territories are still contaminated with anti-personnel mines as of late 2020. The threat of IEDs continues to evolve, terrorising civilian populations and hampering stabilization efforts and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

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\(^1\) 15,764 in 2019, to 10,102 in 2020.)
I am optimistic that the Independent Strategic Review (ISR) on United Nations peacekeeping operations’ responses to IEDs, which is currently underway and which will produce a report to the Security Council on 15 December, will provide useful recommendations. Its scope has been expanded to consider the United Nations ability to mitigate the threat and impact of explosive ordnance on civilian populations as well as on peace operations personnel and mandate delivery. The team will also draw lessons from Special Political Missions and non-mission settings, where we owe much of our progress to your generous voluntary contributions.

I want to thank the member states that contributed to the ISR with financial contributions or in-kind expertise, including support to the UNMAS IED TMAT, and to those Council members that supported its formation and will consider the recommendations in December.

I am encouraged by the ongoing negotiations of this year’s Assistance in Mine Action resolution, and I thank you all for the constructive engagement of your representatives. We hope the resolution will include strengthened language on the rights and needs of victims, as well as an emphasis on the positive impact of coordination bodies such as the Mine Action Area of Responsibility and the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group.

[Looking forward]

Looking ahead, we are sure that we will be operating in rapidly evolving contexts and must be flexible.

We require your support and partnership where gains are being eroded, where forward momentum has stalled, where new threats are emerging or increasing or where a relapse of hostilities has occurred – I refer to places such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Gaza, Sudan and Syria. As Security Council members and 5th committee and GA members we require your support for budget increases in CAR, DRC, Abyei for the 2022 – 2023 budget cycle.

We also need to engage together in those countries that have made progress and are on a path to meeting their obligations. Counties like Colombia, Iraq and Somalia.

I continue to encourage unearmarked and multi-annual contributions, consistent with the commitments of the 2016 World Humanitarian summit. This support ensures we can undertake rapid responses, for example the assessment missions we carried out in Nagorno-Karabakh with UNDP, to the establishment of new operations, as in Niger and northern Ethiopia, and to the support of countries that struggle to fundraise for lack of political interest.

I am looking forward to our next meeting in the margins of the Director’s meeting, which we are planning for mid-May in Geneva.

I recall that the MASG organized a mission Colombia in 2015. On behalf of the IACG, I would encourage the MASG to visit an affected country in 2022. We would be very pleased to support such an endeavour.
I would like to conclude by recognizing the many roles you each play – whether in the Security Council; in the 4th and 5th Committees of the General Assembly; and the Conference for Disarmament, to name just a few. I hope that you will continue to bring attention to mine action in all those fora where you have a seat at the table.

Thank you, and I wish you a fruitful discussion.