

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 2019¹, 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.

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. Countries 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.