

Excellences, colleagues, friends,

I want to **thank Germany for effectively leading the Mine Action Support Group** for the last two challenging years, including in the **hosting of the NDM last year, and I** take this opportunity to also **congratulate you on the adoption of your new strategy on humanitarian mine action for 2022-23 and on the presidency of the APMBC in 2023.**

Looking forward, I welcome **Ambassador Marek and France as the MASG Chair for 2022.** UNMAS is grateful for **France's support of mine action priorities in the General Assembly and the Security Council.**

I also **thank all donors and partners present** for your political and financial support to mine action, **including in the adoption of last fall's mine action resolution.** The resolution incorporated new language on the **impact of contamination on children;** voiced deep concern about the **increased use of IEDs;** stressed the need to **include persons with disabilities, refugees and IDPs in planning** of mine action programmes; and emphasized the **positive impact** of coordination bodies such as the **Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group.** **Thank you all for your consultation** during the process.

I am **pleased to be able to report several trends seen in 2021 data.**

As the world emerged from pandemic lockdowns, the number of **explosive ordnance casualties,** including civilians, peacekeepers and uniformed personnel **in countries and territories with a UN presence, has risen to just over 12,000; on average more than one person killed or wounded every hour of every day.** The **highest numbers of casualties were recorded in Syria followed by Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen.** Civilians continue to be the most **affected** by explosive ordnance, with increased percentage of civilian casualties from 61% to an alarming 81% in 2021. The **unprecedentedly low figure of almost 9,000 total casualties** we reported **for 2020** was likely **linked to covid-related mobility and data-collection restrictions.**

Nonetheless, **despite the pandemic** challenge, sustained clearance efforts continued to help communities live in safer environments. In **Iraq, for example, the number of casualties decreased** from almost 5,000 in pre-pandemic 2018 to around 1300 in 2021.

We continue to observe strong **innovation and creativity in explosive ordnance risk education (EORE)** - such as increased and creative use of social media, television, radio, billboard campaigns or phone apps for EORE.

The data on **face-to-face EORE** shows that **2.5 million beneficiaries were reached by UN-funded projects in 2021, compared to 2.4 million in 2020.** Further, we see **EORE integrated into national school curricula in more countries and more national focal points for EORE appointed.**

We see signs of **continued, improved national commitment to victim assistance.** **More countries and territories with a UN mine action presence** now have a **national disability policy compared to 2020.** Also, **more national authorities in 2021 reported having a national representative for victims of explosive ordnance.**

Last but not least, investments in **national capacity building continue to deliver returns**. For example, in 2021 **more countries and territories reported having a national mine action strategy** than in 2020.

Despite our progress, **mine action needs are considerable in Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, South Caucasus, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen**. I am glad the agenda today includes some of these countries; **we need** your continued attention and commitment, including **to act as our advocates**.

Indeed, while some of these trends are positive, **the presence of explosive ordnance, even one or two items, hampers humanitarian access, brings peacekeeper patrols to a halt, stops rebuilding in Gaza, Mosul and elsewhere, and hinders IDP returns and the resumption of normal life**. It is critical that **mine action be built into the humanitarian, development and peace and security instruments and budgets of your governments**. I urge you to **advocate for mine action across your various entities** where possible. Likewise, within the relevant UN frameworks and organs; the 5th Committee, the C34, the Security Council.

Last year, I briefed you on the launch – at the request of the Security Council – of the **Independent Strategic Review (ISR)** on United Nations peacekeeping operations’ responses to IEDs. The **ISR has concluded, and the report was presented** to the Council in December 2021. **UNMAS – together with the Department of Operational Support – is leading Secretariat efforts to implement the recommendations**. I thank the Member States that enabled the ISR, with **financial contributions or in-kind expertise**, and call, and count, on **your support to bring the recommendations to fruition**.

**Looking forward**, we are launching an **Independent Review of the UNMAS mine action delivery model** which was **requested by various United Nations oversight and budget bodies**. The Review will **look at the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the current delivery model, review alternative delivery models and then recommend the best way forward** to ensure we are delivering the most cost-effective programmes that have the **greatest impact for mine-affected countries and communities as well as for the safety and security of UN peacekeepers**. I look forward to updating you.

I will conclude, in the hopeful anticipation of a less restrictive travel environment, **by urging the MASG to visit an affected country in 2022**. We would be delighted to support such a mission.

I **hope to see many of you face-to-face at the next MASG meeting in the margins of the NDM at the end of June**.

I wish you a successful meeting. Thank you.