

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Alexandre Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General  
for Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions**

**Meeting of the Mine Action Support Group  
21 June 2023, 8:30am-10am, Geneva**

Excellencies,

Colleagues, and dear friends,

I am delighted to join you at this meeting again this year in Geneva.

I would like to thank Ambassador Demichele for chairing this event, and wish him every success during Italy's tenure as the Chair of the Mine Action Support Group. I would like to thank all Group members for your steadfast support. I very much appreciate your hard work in convincing your governments to financially support mine action, even in the current difficult economic and geopolitical environment.

I note with great concern that mine action in humanitarian response plans faces a challenging funding gap – as you would note from figures in the infographics document that we have shared today.

In 2023, the total amount requested for mine action in Humanitarian Response Plans is \$338 million, however, only \$136 million has been received thus far. The humanitarian community urgently needs the balance of \$202 million to protect 25 million people from the risk of mines and explosive ordnance. Funding for Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, is particularly low.

The mine action sector needs a more predictable, multi-year and flexible funding. The Voluntary Trust Fund has to be replenished to help address unmet needs.

The Secretary-General's report on assistance in mine action will be presented to the 76<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The report will reflect the most salient issues of the day in mine action and will highlight how the threat of explosive ordnance affects people in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine, amongst others. It will detail how the threat from improvised explosive device (or the IEDs) has progressively expanded. In Somalia, for example, 2022 saw the highest number of IED incidents on record. The report will also detail the impact of extreme weather events, and climate change, on mine action operations and on the protection of civilians from explosive ordnance threats.

Despite the challenges, United Nations continues to deliver results. For instance, a record number of people were reached with in-person Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (or EORE) programmes in 2022. In the area of survey and clearance, the United Nations introduced innovative tools and new clearance methods, including in urban areas, where contamination is particularly complex.

We look forward to a strong General Assembly resolution on assistance in mine action, in which the rights and needs of survivors feature prominently. In this regard, we count on the support of your governments during the General Assembly negotiations during this fall.

The Secretary-General is expected to issue his “New Agenda for Peace” in the coming weeks. On mine action, we have shared good practices and lessons

learned from sector, such as, monitoring the emergence of new complex risks and using new technologies to address them; designing responses consistent with the peace-humanitarian-development nexus; and building efficient responses through well-coordinated funding appeals. In the experience of mine action, an inclusive approach garners national government support and enables broader community-level engagement.

I am looking forward to the 26<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers. The meeting will include discussions on innovation, the impacts of climate change, durable solutions for internally displaced persons linked to mine action, etc. As always, the meeting intends to provide an opportunity for mine action leaders and practitioners to conduct meaningful exchange on ways to address the challenges in the sector. United Nations, who usually convenes NDM-UN, is co-hosting and co-organising this year's meeting with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). I would like to thank Switzerland for their very generous support to the NDM-UN.

I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of your critical support, and engagement on mine action. The Mine Action Support Group is an invaluable tool that strengthens the valuable partnership between member states and the United Nations system.

My sincerest thanks for your steadfast support.