

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations  
and Chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

**Meeting of the Mine Action Support Group**

**20 October 2022, 14.00hrs, New York**

**Opening Remarks**

*Check against Delivery*

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I am delighted to welcome you to today's meeting of the Mine Action Support Group and see so many of you in-person in New York. I am glad that our colleagues who couldn't come in-person, have joined us remotely.

I would like to thank Ambassador Marek for hosting this important meeting and would like to congratulate him for his leadership during France's tenure as the Chair of the Mine Action Support Group. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Mr. Lucio Demichele, of Italy, every success in his role as the Chair of the Group, next year.

2022 is a momentous year for mine action. In December, we will celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty for signature. It has also been 25 years since the establishment of UNMAS; and 30 years since UNDP and UNICEF started their work in mine action. Since then, the United Nations mine action sector has rendered tens of thousands of square kilometres of land safe for communities, hospitals, schools and infrastructure. We have empowered millions of people to live safely in dangerous environments by providing explosive ordnance risk education, even throughout the pandemic.

Thank you for contributing to these successes with your generous support for mine action.

Distinguished delegates,

While we celebrate the success of mine action, we cannot rest on our laurels. Explosive ordnance accidents are increasing again. According to the monitoring and evaluation

mechanism of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy, the number of casualties of explosive ordnance increased to 12,153 in 2021, from 8,898 in 2020. Non-state armed groups using Improvised Explosive Devices are killing civilians and peacekeepers. Only a few days ago, an IED killed four Chadian peacekeepers which they hit during a routine patrol. Also this month, three Bangladeshi blue helmets passed away after being severely wounded by an improvised explosive device in the Central African Republic. The presence of explosive ordnance is hampering humanitarian response and delaying development assistance. Significant new contamination is hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen. Extensive contamination is delaying returns of the internally displaced persons and development in the region of the South Caucasus. I look forward to hearing about some of these contexts today.

Distinguished delegates,

I am appealing to you today to reinforce your commitment to mine action by advocating for mine action in the United Nations governing bodies here in New York. We have circulated a proposal for the Mine Action Support Group to establish a Mine Action Support Group-New York chapter, open to all interested Member States – not only those making voluntary contributions to mine action - to increase member state advocacy for mine action within the Security Council, the General Assembly and in the governing bodies of the agencies, funds and programmes.

Your advocacy in the Fifth committee last year helped my Department obtain one post in the support account budget for an Improvised Explosive Devices threat mitigation specialist in UNMAS. All other Improvised Explosive Devices expertise in the Department is funded by voluntary contributions and in-kind support from many of you. An advocacy-oriented group of Member States would be particularly timely to support the way forward in the view that the ongoing Independent Review of the UNMAS delivery model will be debated in the 77<sup>th</sup> General Assembly early next year.

Some of you may be members of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Rule of Law or the United Nations Police. Such an association has proven to be an effective advocacy platform for several components

of the Department of Peace Operations; and I hope that you will look favourably at our proposal of a Mine Action Support Group-New York chapter.

Distinguished delegates,

Another appeal today is for you to increase your unearmarked funding to the mine action sector at large and, more specifically, to UNMAS. I am grateful to Denmark and the Netherlands, who are the largest unearmarked funding contributors to UNMAS. I would also like to thank Andorra, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, and United Nations Association Sweden for their unearmarked contributions.

Unearmarked funding allows UNMAS to respond rapidly to crises, as they did when requested by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Department of Safety Security to deploy to Ukraine and when requested by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to support efforts in the South Caucasus.

Unearmarked funds have enabled UNMAS to respond to requests from Resident Coordinators to assess the Improvised Explosive Devices threat in Benin; coordinate the response to contamination in northern Ethiopia; and maintain coordination, risk education and clearance capacity in Syria.

Unearmarked funding also enables UNMAS to deliver on its coordination mandate through leadership of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action and to lead the Mine Action Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster. It has enabled UNMAS in strengthening its headquarters capacity, to design and oversee its programmes and undertake course corrections in real time when circumstances or mandates change. These funds allow UNMAS to support the development of international mine action standards and to advocate for compliance with relevant international humanitarian and human rights law.

Other components of the Department have established standing capacities to enable rapid response, with excellent results. I aim to establish a Standing Mine Action Capacity as well to do likewise. Unearmarked funds will be used to catalyse this effort. I appreciate the positive feedback some of you have already given to this proposal.

Distinguished delegates,

The Mine Action Support Group has been a critical platform to build stronger partnerships in mine action between Member States and the United Nations system. We look forward to our continuing collaboration. I wish you a productive meeting today.

Thank you, for your kind and lasting support.