

**Statement by the Drumlanrig Group  
Mine Action Support Group (MASG) Meeting  
24 October 2024**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to the Chair(s) of the Mine Action Support for the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Drumlanrig Group, which NPA currently chairs and which also includes DCA, DRC, the GICHD, The HALO Trust, HI, and MAG.

We are deeply concerned by continuing conflict in **Gaza** and the terrible impact on the civilian population. Even after a ceasefire is eventually reached, we know only too well that the threat posed by explosive ordnance will remain for years to come and will require a huge and coordinated mine action effort to address. The current situation in **Lebanon** is also of great concern, and those Drumlanrig organisations present on the ground have had to suspend all survey and clearance operations due to the escalation of the conflict. Thanks to great international support, Ukraine was able to set up new structures with the intention to tackle an unprecedented scale of contamination. It's important to keep this momentum as Ukraine looks to fully implement its new and ambitious mine action strategy.

It will take substantial and sustained international support to tackle the explosive ordnance resulting from Gaza, Lebanon and Ukraine; and of course other ongoing **humanitarian crises** such as in Sudan, Ethiopia Myanmar, to name a few. In Gaza particularly, diplomatic engagement is essential to ensure the humanitarian access and deconfliction needed for the mine action sector response.

At the same time, the international community must ensure that those affected states with far lower remaining contamination, sometimes dating back decades, are not forgotten but still receive the international support they need to meet their Article 5 obligations. **Coordination of donor funding** will therefore be more important than ever in the coming years, and the sector is also right to explore the potential establishment of additional mechanisms to meet the collective need, such as innovative finance and other potential initiatives such as a voluntary trust fund under the APMBC specifically for States Parties struggling to secure financial assistance to reach completion. Additionally, the recent announcements of funding reduction for international aid will significantly limit the ability to clear contaminated areas, provide victim assistance, and deliver risk education, directly impacting the safety and livelihoods of affected communities. Additionally, the shifting political contexts in contributing states may prioritize domestic concerns, further reducing financial commitments and international support for mine action programs.

We must not neglect Explosive Ordnance Risk Education as a key means for preventing harm and as a vehicle for collection of contamination data. In contexts where access is challenging, EORE and Conflict Preparedness & Protection (CPP) are often the only measure for saving lives, and where contamination is extensive, reduces risk before clearance can be undertaken. The EORE Advisory Group, which includes international

organisations, UN agencies, and the ICRC, has now worked for more than five years to share and strengthen best practice, including in innovative approaches. We would like to underline the important role of national partners in reaching at-risk populations and making EORE more sustainable. We encourage donors to continue support EORE activities as an emergency measure.

Our organisations look forward to actively participating in the **Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**, which will take place in Siem Reap next month. The importance of **International Humanitarian Law** and of frameworks such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, its sister conventional arms disarmament treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas cannot be overstated, especially during these unstable and conflict-prone times in which global norms and the international rules-based system are under sustained threat. We must collectively—and with renewed vigour and commitment—champion, universalise, and implement these life-saving instruments.

It will be important for the APMBC Fifth Review Conference to adopt strong substantive documents, which will hold the sector in good stead for the next five years. The Oslo Action Plan, adopted at the last Review Conference in 2019, set a solid foundation for the new **Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan** to build on. We're pleased to now see inclusion in the new action plan draft of **environmental and climate change considerations**. The Mine Action Sector, like every sector worldwide, must step up to do our part on this crucially important issue. This endeavour will also be greatly supported by the adoption in July this year of the revised IMAS 07.13 on environmental management and climate change in mine action, and we look forward to the upcoming finalisation of the Technical Note on Mine Action (TNMA) to support the implementation in the field of the new Standard. Both the IMAS and TNMA will provide valuable guidance to national mine action centres, clearance operators, and other implementing partners.

There are, of course, countless topics and countries of importance which we could focus on, but given the time limitations we will leave it there. We look forward to continued and strengthened collaboration with MASG members and with other partners in the sector, as part of our collective endeavours to protect civilians.

Thank you.