

*Mine Action Support Group – MASG  
Open Session  
12 February 2020*

**Opening remarks 11.00**

**2019 UNMAS Achievements**

**UNMAS provided mine action services across the United Nations system**

- Further to the Secretary-General's call for support to the country team in **Burkina Faso**, UNMAS **rapidly deployed** a scoping mission and, subsequently, a senior project coordinator to provide technical expertise to the Resident Coordinator, deliver training for law enforcement agents investigating IED use and provide awareness sessions for communities in the regions affected by the explosive threat.

- After signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Syrian Arab Republic** to conduct **humanitarian mine action** activities in Syria in 2018, UNMAS opened an office in Damascus and initiated mine action operations in 2019. In **Iraq**, UNMAS conducted explosive hazard management and risk education, reducing the risks to civilians and humanitarian partners and enabling reconstruction of critical infrastructure and the safe

return of displaced communities to areas retaken from ISIL.

- In **South Sudan**, UNMAS contributed to **protection** from physical violence and to the creation of a protective environment and the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. For instance, the Service provided safe access for **WFP** to pre-position more than 19,500 metric tons of food in the Greater Upper Nile. In the same region, UNMAS also enabled the safe return of IDPs by providing survey of transit sites and risk education for 1,200 families as requested by **UNHCR**. To protect civilians from physical violence, UNMAS supported UNMISS weapons search operations within the five Protection of Civilians sites in Juba, Bentiu, Bor, Malakal, and Wau, and destroyed confiscated weapons and ammunition in and around the sites.

### **UNMAS coordinated system-wide engagement with legislative bodies and member states**

- UNMAS field coordinators incorporated mine action into 17 humanitarian response **plans** targeting 19 million people in need of protection from explosive ordnance in **Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, the Occupied Palestinian**

## **Territory (oPt), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.**

- The **International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)** Review Board, chaired by UNMAS, adopted a new IMAS on improvised explosive device disposal, which provides guidance for the clearance of IED for humanitarian purposes and in areas where active hostilities have ceased.

### **Humanitarian Emergency continues in Syria**

- Approximately 1/3 of populated communities is estimated to be contaminated with explosive ordnance, affecting some 11.5 million people.
- In 2019, 45 organizations and UN agencies have reported the delivery of humanitarian mine action interventions: risk education (RE), victim assistance (VA) and contamination impact survey, have contributed to the alleviation of sufferings and reduction of explosive ordnance threat to more than 2.4 million people throughout the active hubs in Northwest Syria (NW), North East Syria (NES) and Damascus.

- UNMAS assists international and national NGOs engaged in provision of explosive ordnance RE, contamination impact surveys, and VA. Since 2015, UNMAS has funded 11 projects in NW, amounting to USD 4.3 million.
- In 2020, UNMAS plans to establish a presence in the NES and stands ready to support and enable humanitarian activities by other organizations, and further start the survey and clearance activities. A team will soon be on the ground around the Raqqa city conducting an initial reconnaissance of the explosive ordnance contamination. Following this and based on the findings, UNMAS plans to deploy an Explosive Ordnance Assessment (EOA) team, group of technical experts holding detectors in their hands, to identify the level and type of explosive ordnance contamination and mark the sites for further clearance operations. They will work in support of humanitarian agencies to enable the life-saving activities hampered by explosive ordnance, and to facilitate safe working environment for humanitarian workers and communities.

## **Humanitarian crisis in Yemen escalated**

- The degree of suffering in Yemen is unprecedented with 80% of the entire population requiring some form of humanitarian assistance and protection.
- The high-level, and complexity, of the explosive hazard throughout Yemen, exacerbates this humanitarian catastrophe.
- In partnership with DPPA, UNMAS deployed a Chief Technical Advisor to **Yemen** in August 2019 to support the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) and the Head of the United Nations Mission in support of the **Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA)** in their liaison with the parties on the mine action-related aspects of the Stockholm Agreement, provide safety advice to Mission leadership and observers and advise Mission leadership on management of explosive remnants of war to inform future CONOPS for the Mission.

## **GA Resolution on Assistance in Mine Action**

- The resolution notes the alarming effect of mines and ERW on children, humanitarian access and sustainable development. The resolution recognizes the importance of gender and age

perspectives in mine action and the needs of persons with disabilities.

### **One year of implementation of the UN Strategy Strategic Objectives 1,2, & 3:**

Under SO 1, mine action strengthens protection of civilians and enables socioeconomic growth in a variety of ways.

- Of note, as the number of forcibly displaced persons continues to rise, the United Nations adapted its responses to provide displaced populations with protection from explosive ordnance. In Libya, UNMAS trained a gender-balanced team of internally displaced persons to deliver RE in camps.

Victim Assistance, SO 2, is a top priority for the UN as it continues to be the most underfunded pillar of humanitarian mine action:

- At the global level: Launch of “Safe Ground,” a United Nations-led global advocacy and fundraising campaign. It aims to “turn minefields into playing fields,” raise awareness about victims of EO and mobilize resources for VA programmes.

- At the country level: The United Nations supports referral pathways, improving data gathering and analysis on victims and their needs. In Syria, UNMAS supports and coordinates victim assistance among humanitarian mine action actors, including physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, medical support, referrals and self-care through mobile teams.

Under SO3, the United Nations supports national ownership and capacity in mine action according to the maturity, capacity and needs of the national authorities.

### **Significant decrease in funding**

- Despite the alarming rise in casualties and the dire humanitarian crisis at the global level, in 2019, 25 Member States (and the EU, UNA Sweden, UNF) contributed USD 69,040,728 to the UN VTF. This was a significant decrease (almost 50 per cent) in UN VTF income comparing to 2018.
- Victim Assistance remains underfunded

## UNMAS 2020 priorities

- In 2020, UNMAS will establish a mobile IED Threat Mitigation Training and Capacity Building Team at the UN Regional Service Center in Entebbe.
- UNMAS will also continue to **promote assistance to victims of explosive ordnance through the Mine Action AOR**. UNMAS messaging will continue to focus on the victim assistance.
- UNMAS focus will be on monitoring and evaluation capacity.

## **Focus on the regional approaches**

### UNMAS engagement in the Sahel

- Since 2013, UNMAS, as part of MINUSMA, implements a comprehensive IED threat-mitigation framework in Mali which has contributed to protecting civilians and enabled Mission mobility in an asymmetric threat environment.
- Since 2018, UNMAS scaled up its engagement in the Sahel with the deployment of emergency response teams to northeast Nigeria (July 2018)

and to Burkina Faso (September 2019) to coordinate and strengthen explosive threat-mitigation efforts following the overall deterioration of the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin and in the Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger tri-border area.

### Key messages

- The bleak security outlook for the Sahel region, requires action and preparedness on multiple fronts, in particular: scaled-up humanitarian mine action response and intensified efforts towards the development of national IED threat-mitigation capacities.
- Humanitarian mine action (especially explosive ordnance risk education and information management) remains a critical protection and prevention measure. Since late 2017, Mali has experienced a significant increase in IED incidents particularly in the centre of the country, which resulted in high numbers of casualties among civilians (2017:71 ; 2019:178). In Burkina Faso the first civilian victims of IEDs were recorded in 2019 (2018:0 ; 2019:35). In northeast Nigeria, Boko-Haram factions use of IEDs continue to impact civilians (2019: 217).
- National ownership is a key enabler to the restoration of State authority, the protection of

- civilians and to broader international efforts for stabilization and sustained peace in the Sahel. UNMAS expertise and experience in delivering pre-deployment training for MINUSMA troop-contributing countries, including Sahelian countries, continue to strengthen regional ownership for IED threat-mitigation capacities.
- Financial support and strategic engagement promoting programmatic approaches and joint analysis at regional level should be encouraged for a more integrated response to protection matters across the Sahel region, including in addressing the explosive threat.

### Peace process in the Sudans

- In South Sudan, the de-escalation of fighting has opened formerly inaccessible areas, which has enabled UNMAS to obtain more accurate estimate of contamination. However, the continued fighting and inter-communal violence remains in some areas including the Greater Equatoria, which is most contaminated. Prevalence of sustained peace is necessary for UNMAS to clear the remaining hazards.
- The relatively holding peace deal also led to rapprochement and surveys indicate that many displaced are keen to return to their homes. When this realizes, UNMAS is willing to support

- the returnees and communities through survey and clearance of the return routes and land.
- In South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, peace talks are ongoing between the newly formed Sudanese government and armed opposition groups, and there are high hopes for peace. In parallel, negotiation for opening corridors for humanitarian assistance in the opposition-controlled area has made progress and an agreement on modality of humanitarian assistance delivery has been reached. UNMAS is undertaking an emergency procurement in the cross-line area for the first time since 2011 when all international mine action NGOs were expelled.
  - In Sudan, UNMAS currently has two programmes, one in support to UNAMID and another in support to the Government of Sudan efforts to fulfill country obligations under article 5 of APMBC. As UNAMID prepares for exit, UNMAS is working on re-alignment of its presence and work in the area, so that it can continue to provide support in the best way.

## **Prevention**

- Although mine action takes place almost exclusively in conflict or post-conflict settings, UNMAS has a concrete impact on preventing the

escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. UNMAS contributes by:

- Facilitating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, which, according to the UNSG, is “the best defence against the risks of violent conflict” (e.g. facilitating economic recovery in Sudan; rehabilitating schools and infrastructure in Iraq).
- Promoting Sustaining Peace (e.g. helping to reintegrate combatants in Colombia in support of peace accord; in Iraq, supporting reconstruction efforts helps consolidates peace dividends and stabilization)
- Helping to strengthen partnerships (UNMAS brings together humanitarian, development and peace and security sectors actors, NGOs, regional organizations and the private sector in accordance the SG’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, A/72/707, for closer strategic and operational partnerships across sectors).

### **Weapons and Ammunition Management:**

- WAM continues to be important in the current UNMAS capacity building and support projects

for national authorities (CAR, South Sudan, Mali, Somalia).

- With the new UN WAM policy for peace operations and the inclusion of these standards in the Contingent Owned Equipment manual, there will be a high demand for support from TCCs to implement – where existing UNMAS WAM experts in peace operations stand ready to support
- UNMAS contributes also with technical expertise to the ongoing review of the International Ammunition Training Guidelines and supports the Technical Review Board and ODA.