

United Nations



Nations Unies

Closing Remarks by

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**19th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors
and UN Advisers**

Friday 19 February 2016

Merci Stefano
Excellence,
Distingues Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you at the close of this meeting.

As we approach the third decade of these meetings, it is vital that we do not become complacent. The task is vast, it is here to stay, and it is challenging. We are all at the service of affected communities. It is not only our duty but our responsibility to remain engaged, to remain innovative, and to remain creative.

I am glad that this meeting has been so rich and enlightening. I am grateful to all of you for coming, I am grateful to Mr Moller, the Director General of the UN in Geneva, who has opened the 'Palais des Nations' to our meeting. We have, I am told, gathered a record number of close to 600 participants. The sessions were well attended, we have learnt new things, addressed challenges, highlighted innovations and delivered maximum value to each delegate who has committed the time out of their busy schedules to be here.

This amazing and unique partnership between states, both affected and not, the United Nations and civil society is obviously the engine that we need to keep running. The fact that parliamentarians have been engaged, that we have brought in the private sector, are features that I intend to maintain in these meetings. Mine action is people-centred. We work together, the UN, operators, affected states, governments. The problem cannot be solved by one entity alone.

We need to continue to look at what we are doing, to evaluate what we are doing, and to improve the way we are doing things. One of the remarks that I heard during the session devoted to monitoring and evaluation comes to mind. Monitoring and evaluation is no longer the slow, bureaucratic, laboursome task that we were afraid of at the beginning. We have turned it into a valuable tool for everybody in situations as diverse as Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Nepal. We see the fruits of monitoring and evaluation in improved coordination at all levels, as well as data management and analysis. We are pulling the streams together to help the populations in need.

I am particularly pleased that we have been able to demonstrate here a seamless partnership within the UN as we discussed it in previous days: UNICEF, UNDP, UNMAS are traditional partners but we have gone beyond that. We were able to give you OCHA, OHCHR, and UNHCR, the humanitarian affairs, the human rights, the refugees representatives at high levels that we had not seen before. Most of them stayed only the first day, but they have gone back to their offices knowing that this is an important and influential meeting, with high level participation.

Furthermore, we enjoyed the participation of parliamentarians, Mr. Mullin, thank you again for coming. We were also joined by the US Under-Secretary of State, Rose Gottemoeller. I am grateful to my partner, the GICHD, for making it possible to a number of you to join this meeting, their sponsorship programme is of great value to what we are doing. I am also grateful to the GICHD for the innovation and the creativity that they demonstrate. I would say, as UNMAS, that you are of tremendous importance. Your technical knowledge and expertise plays an immense role in our partnership and increases the impact of what we are doing.

The Mine Action Support Group meeting, held on the margins of this meeting was also excellent. I would like to congratulate Italy, the new Chair, for their engagement. We heard extremely interesting presentations; it is important for donors to remain engaged and to better understand that what we do is structured, planned, rational, evidence-based; that the money is spent carefully.

I would like to thank the interpreters of the UN. For the first time, the UN was able to give you the interpretation that you had asked for so long. It was a pleasure for me to hear French, Spanish and Arabic from the podium and from the floor. We are giving you a sense that you can come and participate. I thank the donors, who have made it possible for us to do that, and the interpreters that have gone beyond their call of duty in staying at times beyond their hours.

I would like to thank my own staff, at UNMAS, they made tremendous effort. They have not only stayed long hours, but were also creative and innovative. We wanted to give you an agenda that would be of interest to you and a meeting that is field-oriented. We are not here to talk about ourselves. We are here to talk about the things that matter to you. We seek to engage states to support the things that you do at field-level, and we will remain committed to doing so.

The impact of this meeting is clear, but we will continue to measure it and improve it. The agenda you have seen, the programme of work results from an enormous effort over many months consulting with colleagues, with you in the field, to make sure that it is targeted to your needs. It is an effort of all my colleagues of the IACG.

Everything you have seen has been the result of hard work. The UNMAS Geneva team has been engaged in substance, making sure that the humanitarian pillar of mine action is alive and kicking, that the Global Protection Cluster means something, and that we triangulate between agencies in the field, headquarters and the Member States. We will continue to do so.

I join Stefano in wishing you a good journey back home. Your job is not finished, the WHS is coming up. We must convey the message to Istanbul. We must use the 4th of April to convey our message. In your capitals, in your field programs, make sure the buzz we have created this week is not lost and forgotten the minute we leave Geneva. The work continues,

we are all in it together, and I thank you again on behalf of the UN, of all the partners, and most importantly on behalf of the affected communities.

This meeting is closed.