

MINUTES

MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2018

UNITED STATES PERMANENT MISSION TO UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

1. WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair of the MASG, Mr Stanley L. Brown, Director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) in the US State Department, opened the meeting at 13.00 hours and welcomed the MASG members to the meeting, along with the observer organizations. He also extended a warm welcome to Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Chair of the IACG-MA and Ms Agnès Marcaillou, Director of UNMAS.

In his opening remarks, the Chair noted that the number of new civilian casualties from landmines, ERW and IEDs had been increasing in recent years. This made the work of the MASG even more important by ensuring that donor support was having the maximum impact and reaching priority areas. Mr Brown then confirmed the agenda for the meeting and a copy of it, along with the attendance sheet, is attached to these minutes.

2. STATEMENT BY MR JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX, CHAIR OF THE UN INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION GROUP ON MINE ACTION (IACG-MA) AND USG DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The Chair introduced Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA). Mr Lacroix thanked the Chair and the MASG for being a valuable forum for support, discussion, partnership and strategic guidance for the work of the United Nations in addressing the global threat posed by explosive devices. Mr Lacroix also thanked UNMAS for their outstanding work in the field and also for conducting important strategic and policy development work in the past year, such as the development of the draft United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019 – 2023. He noted that this Strategy would have an emphasis on support to victims and went on to highlight a number of countries of concern.

Mr Lacroix stressed that the need for mine action is as important as ever, and gave the example of the post-conflict areas in Iraq, where mine action is needed before any reconstruction or development activities can take place. In Somalia and Mali, UNMAS had been involved with training peacekeepers and providing risk education to civilians. He also noted the need to open greater space in Yemen to allow humanitarian assistance. Mr Lacroix emphasized that in line with the UN Reform Agenda, the work being undertaken reinforces the cross-pillar nature of mine action, enabling Member States and the UN system to be more effective, and hopefully more successful, at a wide range of UN engagements: prevention, protection, human rights, humanitarian responses, stabilization, peace sustainment, post-conflict recovery and national capacity development.

In concluding, Mr Lacroix stressed to MASG members that their work remained critical for the United Nations to continue its good work, both at the strategic and operational levels. Because mine action is a cross-cutting issue, he particularly requested donor support in the coordination of system wide projects. These include: establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism and mine action-related responses, developing gender specific guidelines, as well as ensuring a coherent UN response to the threat of IEDs, as requested by the Secretary-General in his disarmament agenda.

In response to a question about his recent visit to South Sudan, Mr Lacroix noted the extent of mine action activities already underway, while highlighting the potential for more work in these areas if conditions were to stabilize.

3. COUNTRY AND THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 Nigeria: The Chair introduced the UN Resident Coordinator for Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon. Mr Kallon started his talk with a personal reflection of when he witnessed a major landmine incident in Afghanistan early in his United Nations career. Turning to Nigeria, Mr Kallon addressed three aspects. The first was to remind the meeting about the scale of the Nigeria – it is the 5th largest country in the world with a growing population, has the largest economy in Africa and has significant oil reserves. However, challenges include rising poverty and conflicts across six geographic zones e.g. Boko Haram in the northeast Borno state. The root causes of problems include weak institutions, climate change, corruption and sluggish economic growth. Secondly, Mr Kallon outlined the problem of explosive hazards, particularly in the north east. The United Nations is dealing with a protection crisis because of 1.8 million displaced people and another 7 million needing assistance. The area is littered with ERW and anti-tank/antipersonnel mines but the full scope of the problem is not known. Boko Haram use the ERW to produce IEDs, including using children as human-borne IEDs, which cause hundreds of civilian casualties. The presence of ERW and other explosive devices creates a barrier to the return of IDPs and also creates food shortages due to lack of access to agricultural land. The third area Mr Kallon addressed were the mine action needs in Nigeria. There are only two international mine action NGOs operating in the country and they are only conducting survey and risk education. There are no humanitarian mine clearance teams in-country, a lack of victim assistance projects, no injury surveillance system, and very limited national capacity to address IEDs and ERW.

Mr Kallon thanked UNMAS for their assistance to date and noted that the key challenges facing mine action operators were the lack of the following; access, data, resources and humanitarian response. In the bigger picture, a three pronged approach was needed in the north-east. They were military action to deal with Boko Haram, scaling up of humanitarian assistance and addressing the root causes of the crisis. The UN Security Council Resolution 2365 mentioned mine action, however Mr Kallon noted that funding is very limited and the situation of ERW and other explosive devices will become urgent once IDPs start to return.

In question time, the Swiss representative noted that Nigeria is not active in the meetings of the APMBC and needs to submit an Article 5 extension request. Mr Kallon replied that he has raised this issue with the Government in the past and will do so again. He also explained that about 20% of all munitions used failed to explode, which provides additional explosives for Boko Haram to make more IEDs (many of which would fall under the definition of an anti-personnel mine) so the problem is growing. Ms Marcaillou, Director UNMAS, explained that the current strategy of UNMAS in Nigeria is to address the humanitarian emergency aspects of ERW first. She said that they were taking a step-by-step approach and plans to build local capacity and requesting extra resources will follow when the conditions are right.

3.2 IED Threat Mitigation Update: Mr Will Meurer explained the aim of the IED Threat Mitigation Advisory Team (TMAT) is to ensure the readiness of actors to address the IED threat and mitigate its impact on populations in humanitarian contexts through the development of policy, operational and technical guidance, including an update of IMAS to include relevant IED disposal standards, and the development of Specialized Training Materials (for example IEDD and Conventional Munition Disposal [CMD] and IED Threat Awareness training courses). Mr Meurer stressed that while many IEDs meet the definition of an anti-personnel landmine, the clearance of them requires a very different skill set due to the complex and varied nature of their construction. He provided some photographic examples of various Victim Operated IEDs and their methods of operation, such as pressure plates, anti-lift devices, radio controlled activation etc.

The TMAT team within UNMAS currently consists of two seconded staff members (from the USA and Netherlands) and will soon be joined by another (from Germany). However, additional funding is required. Mr Meurer noted that now the IEDD standards have been approved, UN CMD and IEDD training courses are being developed to be ready April 2019 and UNMAS can continue to build up their data base and knowledge hub.

In question time, the UK representative said that she had visited Iraq recently and asked what capacity existing mine action operators (and national authorities in other places) had to deal with IEDD. Mr Meurer said that due to the special nature of the threat, there was a shortage of trained IEDD operators worldwide. The Director of the GICHD asked what standards would apply for the training curricula being developed and would they apply to humanitarian situations (as the current work on IMAS covers competency standards for IEDD operators)? Mr Meurer responded that the training curricula that UNMAS is developing are based on the EOD Unit Manual and IEDD standards as the technical basis – which could then be applied to training for force protection units within the United Nations system, or be available for humanitarian agencies. IMAS will remain the reference for training of humanitarian agencies.

The full TMAT power point presentation is available on the MASG website.

3.3 UN Mine Action Strategy: A combined presentation on the development of a new UN Mine Action Strategy was given by Ms Maria Vardis (UNMAS), Mr Hugues Laurence (UNICEF) and Ms Oksana Leshchenko (UNDP). Ms Vardis reminded the meeting that existing Strategy will finish at the end of 2018. She then outlined the process taken by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group – Mine Action (IACG-MA) to develop a new strategy which will cover the period 2019 - 2023. The process

began in May and has involved extensive consultations with Member States, research institutions, civil society, operators, etc., along with a series of retreats. A draft is currently being finalized and it is expected that the new Strategy will be endorsed by the IACG-MA Principals meeting in December 2018. It is then planned to launch the Strategy at the National Directors Meeting in Geneva in February 2019.

A handout was distributed on the methodology used to develop the Strategy, based on the Theory of Change for achieving global impact along five strategic objectives. A copy of the power point presentation is also on the MASG website. In summary, the Strategy expands the focus from an aspirational vision to a UN-focussed results and accountability framework. The speakers then outlined the rationale behind the Mission Statement, the Overarching Goal, the Strategic Priorities and the steps to be undertaken to strengthen effectiveness and accountability. A strengthened monitoring and evaluation approach will also focus on building a body of qualitative and quantitative evidence to report on outputs for which the UN is mandated and accountable. As a result, there will be a continued need to invest in M&E tools, resources and capacities to collate, analyse and report.

In Question time, the Director GICHD thanked UNMAS for the opportunity to participate in the process and to comment on the draft Strategy. He noted that most organizations in the mine action sector were going in a similar direction and adopting similar methodologies. While it was relatively easy to measure one's own work, it would be good for the sector to have some common assessments, like case studies and impact assessment. Ms Marcaillou said that it was important for the 14 UN agencies involved with mine action, plus the GICHD and other organizations to have a collective aim. However, she stressed that the UN Strategy was an accountability framework to show Member States what the UN had achieved. Ms Marcaillou agreed that the effort now should be to ensure and show how all the various outputs contribute to a common outcome for the mine action sector.

3.4 Yemen: Mr Stephen Bryant, the UNDP Chief Technical Adviser in Yemen had been invited to address the meeting via Skype. However, due to technical problems this was not possible. A copy of Mr Bryant's speaking notes is available on the MASG website.

3.5 Syria: The Director of UNMAS, Ms Marcaillou, provided an update on the situation in Syria. She said that the United Nations follows a 'Whole of Syria' approach and its work is in line with the Humanitarian Response Plan 2018 (which includes mine action). In July, UNMAS signed a MoU with the Government of Syria and is in discussions on the way forward vis-à-vis humanitarian mine action. Access remains challenging but immediate priority activities include risk education, victim assistance and assessments. UNMAS Director reiterated that any activities will be guided by humanitarian principles and that UNMAS is taking it 'one step at a time'.

4. UPDATES FROM MASG MEMBER STATES

4.1 Germany: The representative of Germany advised that throughout 2018 Germany had been working on developing a new mine action strategy, with assistance from the GICHD. Consultations with partners had been undertaken and a Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action was held in Berlin on 18 September 2018. The Strategy is based on Germany's experience since 1992 and is part

of the crisis engagement instruments of the FFO. The new document provides the national strategic orientation for German support to humanitarian mine action for the three year period 2019 – 2021. The strategy is focussed on supporting humanitarian principles, Germany's commitment to the relevant international treaties and improving coordination in the mine action sector. The strategy will cover activities like survey and clearance, risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and strengthening mine action normative and strategic frameworks. The next steps in the process are to translate the Strategy into German, decide on priority countries, seek internal FFO approval and then start to implement the strategy from January 2019.

4.2 United Kingdom: As a founding signatory of the APMBC, the UK has played a major role in tackling the legacy of landmines and it continues to be a priority for the government. At an event in 2017 with HRH Prince Harry, the UK had committed GBP100 million for the three year period 2017 - 2020, which was triple its previous pledge. Through this pledge, the UK has supported activities in a range of selected countries, such as Cambodia, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, mainly through MAG, HALO Trust and NPA. This year the UK expanded the global programme to include Angola, Lebanon, Sudan, as well as Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Between July 2014 and June 2018 DFID-supported programming released over 169 million square metres of land. The UK has also supported mine action through their Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in Afghanistan, Libya, Colombia, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka and South Caucuses. The UK has recently announced a new GBP46 million package, but will need to balance legacy countries with new and emerging issues. The UK has supported UNMAS for activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen, and has also supported the GICHD. The UK shares the goal of a mine free world by 2025, but recognizes the need to think creatively on how best to work together and utilize new measures, such as public private partnerships.

4.3 Italy: Italy is concerned with the humanitarian impact of ERW and supports projects that cover the five pillars of mine action. Italy promotes a human rights approach to the issue, such as ensuring that victim assistance projects are integrated into other disability and physco-social activities. In the current year Italy has provided EUR3.7 million for activities in Afghanistan, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan, and they are considering Libya and Palestine in the future. Italy also provides assistance to the GICHD and support to treaties through the ISU APMBC and CCM, GMAP and Geneva Call.

4.4 European Union: The EU expressed support for UN efforts towards a whole-of-system approach. It drew attention to a new publication providing an overview of the EU-funded mine action projects in 33 affected countries. The EU emphasised the importance of comprehensive national mine action strategies, which should be developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders and facilitate also donor coordination. It was noted that the EU-funded projects under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention contribute to the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan. National stakeholder dialogues are being held in various countries, including in Iraq, Uganda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Senegal, to strengthen strategic planning and programming of their mine clearance and victim assistance policies. Furthermore, the EU informed about the European Commission proposal of 17 April 2018 for a new EU Regulation on the marketing and use of explosive precursors which aims at further decreasing the amount of explosive precursors available to the general public, thereby reducing the risk that chemical substances are used for the illicit manufacture of explosives, in line with UNSC Resolution 2370 of August 2017.

4.5 Netherlands: For the Netherlands, mine action aligns with its policy of strengthening human security and the rule of law, and increasing the safety of civilians. The Netherlands provides funds to three main partners for work in 13 countries, and also supports UNMAS and the GICHD. The Netherlands is currently working on a new high level policy, as the current programme ends in 2020. The new policy and tendering period will cover 2020 to 2024.

4.6 Australia: Australia regards ERW as threat to human security and has had a long standing commitment to mine action. With regards to treaties Australia has a three pronged approach; funding the ISUs, supporting the sponsorship programmes and playing its part in furthering international commitments. Australia maintains a focus on SE Asia e.g. Cambodia, but has also provided funding to Syria and Iraq as part of broader assistance packages.

4.7 Sweden: Sweden has a global mine action programme managed through SIDA and it based on a strategy covering the period 2018 – 2021. Activities are implemented in 13 countries through DDG and MAG. Sweden also supports the GICHD, the ISU APMBC and has seconded staff to UNMAS. Finally, Sweden has contributed to the multi-country trust fund for Colombia.

4.8 USA: For the FY October 2017 to September 2018 the USA allocated US\$341 million to Conventional Weapons Destruction and of this, more than US\$310 million was for humanitarian mine action. This was the highest total ever. Around US\$106 million was for IEDD/ERW clearance in Iraq. In Syria, US\$63 million was used to fund three operators working in liberated areas in the north-east. Other funding has been provided to Afghanistan (US\$20 million), Colombia (US\$21 Million) and then SE Asia and the Pacific Islands (US\$43 million), Africa Great Lakes, Ukraine etc. The expected allocation for FY 2019 is US\$189 million. While this represents a shortfall, many FY 18 projects will carry over as part of multi-year projects and if necessary, additional funding may be sought depending on broader U.S. foreign policy priorities.

4.9 Estonia: Mine Action has been a priority for Estonia for over a decade. Estonia does not have a specific mine action strategy but includes it within its broader human security strategy. Estonia has provided funding to UNMAS (for Iraq) and to several other bi-lateral projects, and has provided training assistance to Ukraine.

4.10 Finland: Finland currently operates under five-year mine action concept 2016 – 2020. Finnish support is focussed on fragile states where mines pose a problem, like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Ukraine. Approximately half the US\$14 million allocated for 2016 – 2020 will be to support activities in Iraq and Syria. Finland's partner organizations are UNMAS, ICRC, HALO Trust, MAG and the GICHD.

4.11 Canada: Canada is committed to the APMBC and firmly believes that mine action is essential to post conflict, recovery and development. Canada also considers the gender aspect in all its mine action work. Canada had provided CAD\$17.2 million for FY 2018/19 to support a range of countries meet their APMBC and CCM obligations. Canada has also provided CAD\$3 million over three years to support the GICHD, the ISUs and GMAP.

5. UPDATES FROM MASG OBSERVERS

5.1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD): The Director of the GICHD briefed on one key aspects of the current work of the Centre – that of explosive ordnance in urban areas. He explained that there was comparatively little guidance on this issue, but that it was a growing concern for mine action operators. A workshop was held on this topic in Erbil in May 2018 and the main findings were that; clearance of IEDs poses the biggest challenge in Iraq and Syria, most deployed forces need guidance for humanitarian clearance, better access to survey and technical data is needed for threat assessments and operational planning, and prioritization in urban areas is complex due to the multiplicity of actors operating there and the large numbers of people waiting to return. The next steps for the GICHD are to complete case studies, develop technical materials and draft a guide to MA in urban areas. The GICHD will also assist with leading special working groups to draft new IMAS on 'IED Disposal' and 'Building Clearance'

5.2 ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF): The Director said that over its 20 years of existence and on behalf of donor countries, the ITF had implemented programmes in the field of humanitarian demining, mine victim assistance and related projects to a total of US\$430 million. In order to achieve the highest efficiency and effectiveness, he stressed the importance of mine action donors working together, as well as the importance of partnerships. He encouraged the strengthening of outreach to those donors who have yet to make a commitment to mine action. The Director informed the meeting that in June 2018, the ITF received the status of a Member States Specialized Agency of the European Commission (DG ECHO) and the ITF can now receive funding from this EU fund. Finally, the Director reiterated his offer of support should the MASG wish to undertake a field visit to the SE European region.

5.3 Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR)/James Madison University: The Director of CISR reminded the meeting that in Geneva last February CISR had announced the launching of an on-line Conventional Weapons Depository. This tool had become well utilized and the Director listed the number of documents that had been uploaded since then. CISR is also looking at harmonizing data-bases about mine accidents. The current edition of the Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction features both Iraq and Syria (which was relevant to today's meeting) and in February CISR will launch a book on Victim activated IEDs (VIED).

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Next meeting: The Chair confirmed that the next MASG meeting would be held in Geneva in the margins of the 22nd National Directors Meeting (NDM-UN), which is to be held from 5 to 8 February 2019. The exact date and time of the MASG meeting will be advised.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair invited the Director of UNMAS to give some closing remarks. Ms Marcaillou thanked the Chair for the meeting and for the attention and commitment that the US has given to the MASG. Ms Marcaillou said that no one can do it alone, and that the MASG is a good forum for information

exchange and coordination. On the UN side, Ms Marcaillou said that the involved agencies were well coordinated through the IACG-MA and that UNMAS was also the coordinator of the Global Protection Cluster. Finally, Ms Marcaillou thanked all the MASG members for the support that they have given to the United Nations through the various mandates, and stressed that a stronger United Nations in mine action makes the world safer.

In his closing remarks, Mr Brown thanked all members and observers for their participation in the meeting. He urged everyone not to forget or overlook other potential funding sources and try to get them to the MASG. He finished by saying that it was important for the MASG to engage all partners and that it would not take too much effort to get some mine affected countries to finish the job.

8. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair closed the meeting at 15.00 hours.

As at 2 Dec 18