

MINUTES
MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP MEETING
GENEVA, 17 FEBRUARY 2015

PART 1: MASG MEMBERS ONLY

1. Welcoming Remarks.

The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Misako Kaji, welcomed all the participants to the meeting. The Chair referred to the agenda and noted that today's meeting would be held in two parts, the first part for MASG members only, and then the observers would join for the second part. In her opening remarks, the Chair noted that Japan was now entering its second year as Chair of the MASG, and that she encouraged members to start thinking about a new chair for next year. Ambassador Kaji drew attention to the document titled "Future work of the MASG 2014 – 2015" which had been recently updated and remained valid for the rest of this year. Finally, the Chair said that she had been advised by the USA that they would continue to fund the MASG Secretariat position for another year. The Chair expressed her appreciation on behalf of the meeting for this financial support from the USA. A copy of the agenda for the meeting, the list of attendees and the document titled "Future work of the MASG 2014 -2015" is attached.

2. Discussion on MASG matters.

The Chair then requested the representative of the United States to lead a discussion on topics of relevance to the MASG, under the provision of the Chatham House Rule. Topics discussed included; where is mine action heading, update on current donor policies, strategies and trends, donor funding constraints and the future of the MASG.

In concluding the session, the Chair recalled that the MASG does not make joint decisions, but that this had been a very useful conversation and that it should be continued in the future. All members present agreed that it was appropriate for the MASG to hold a 'members only' session when relevant.

Some MASG members provided written updates on their work, and these will be posted on the MASG website in due course, along with these minutes.

3. Update from the MASG Secretariat

The MASG Secretariat, Mr Ian Mansfield, outlined his work as the MASG secretariat since the last MASG meeting in October 2014. A copy of the report will be posted on the MASG website.

PART 2: MASG members and Observers

4. Updates from MASG Observers (UN IACG-MA, OAS, GICHD, JMU/CISR and ITF).

Due to the short time available, the observer organizations had been requested to provide their updates in writing. These reports will be posted on the MASG website, along with these minutes.

5. Statement by Assistant Secretary-General Dmitry Titov, on behalf of Under Secretary-General Herve Ladsous, DPKO.

On behalf of Under Secretary-General Ladsous, Mr Titov expressed his appreciation to the members of the MASG for their ongoing commitment to the work of the United Nations in mine action. He also thanked the government of Japan for their leadership of the MASG, and for a recent contribution of \$14 million to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund.

Mr Titov went on to say that UNMAS goes into 2015 a markedly stronger organisation, uniquely equipped to address the existing and emerging threats described in yesterday's sessions of the National Director's Meeting. Member States and DPKO value UNMAS' fast, flexible, and comprehensive approach, and are increasingly putting UNMAS on the front line for policy development, delivery of peacekeeping and special political mission-mandated tasks, and facilitation of humanitarian mine action and explosive hazards management activities throughout the world.

To support greater coherence at all levels, Mr Titov said that in 2015, UNMAS will continue to develop the systems presented at the last MASG meeting. UNMAS is streamlining and updating management tools and procedures, contributing to new guidance, and establishing new internal policies. These measures will enable UNMAS to thrive in the complex and challenging environment it faces, resulting in higher quality delivery and decision-making. UNMAS also looks forward to the results of the independent external audit report that will be released later this year.

Mr Titov said that UNMAS continues to be committed to cost-effective, transparent programming, and results-based evidence. The Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism, made possible thanks to the generous support of many MASG member governments, provides accountability in the way donor funds are used to deliver the UN Strategy on Mine Action. Data and analysis will be used to inform the next Report of the Secretary-General on Assistance in Mine Action, to be submitted to the General Assembly by June 2015.

The launch of the Portfolio of Mine Action Projects for 2015 was highlighted by Mr Titov. The Portfolio covers projects in more than 20 countries and was designed to match country needs to donor resources. Mr Titov called on the MASG to take note of the funding gaps identified by affected states and seek to address them. He also noted that political support from donors is equally crucial in their strategies and responses to emergency responses.

Mr Titov encouraged MASG members to take active part in ensuring that the next United Nations General Assembly resolution on "Assistance in Mine Action" reflects accurately the threats posed to civilians and peacekeepers alike. Recognition of UNMAS activity by MASG members, across all five pillars of Mine Action, as well as in the field of counter-IED and Weapons and Ammunition management, is essential.

In conclusion, Mr Titov thanked the MASG for its longstanding commitment to mine action and noted that MASG support for UNMAS protects civilians and empowers local communities, contributes to wider stabilization and humanitarian, peace and development dividends, and delivers concrete and measurable results.

In question time, Mr Titov was asked about the risks to neutrality when UNMAS deals with IEDs, and also about the allocation of un-earmarked funds in the UN Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF). In response, Mr Titov agreed that dealing in counter-IED work was a new area and not easy to deal with. However, he noted that UNMAS had a dual role, as both a humanitarian player and as part of DPKO. In the context of DPKO operations, dealing with IEDs was not 'mission creep' but rather that UNMAS had a responsibility to protect United Nations personnel and property. He did not think that this clashed with the humanitarian side of UNMAS' work, as they were not attacking networks, but rather protecting people. Ms Marcaillou elaborated that in the humanitarian context, UNMAS only dealt with 'abandoned IEDs'. She also reminded the meeting that figures related to un-earmarked funds in the VTF were presented at the MASG meeting last October, and that they represented a very small percentage of funds in the VTF.

6. Update and discussion on the realignment of UNDP mine action – Ms Sara Sekkenes, UNDP

Ms Sara Sekkenes passed on the apologies from Mr. Magdy Martinez, Assistant Administrator and Director for the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support at UNDP New York, for not being able to attend the MASG meeting to explain UNDPs recent realignment of its mine action policy.

Ms Sekkenes reminded the meeting that the current UNDP Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017 had been approved by its Executive Board, and that it outlined seven specific outcome areas. The strategy also involved an organizational review which led to a more leaner organization at the headquarters level and reduced the number of so called 'global offers', including mine action.

However, after the first year of implementation of the Strategic Plan, and in the light of pressing demand from existing national counterparts and explicit support from development partners, as well as new programmes starting up requesting UNDP support, Ms Sekkenes said that UNDP had now decided to reconsider this decision. She said that discussions are ongoing at headquarters in New York to reintroduce mine action as a "global offer". This included a review of headquarters capacity to support UNDP country offices with technical assistance and programmatic support in the further development of national mine action programmes, with clear development objectives connected to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

Ms Sekkenes said that the approach being considered will mirror the previous UNDP approach of focusing its main activities at country level, whilst continuing with a more targeted and strategic policy engagement at global level, to better profile the value added of UNDPs mandate in this sector. UNDP will not reshape its mine action agenda into business as usual. UNDP does not see itself as the main actor in this sector, or as capable of operating as a standalone actor. UNDP will continue to emphasize working in support of national programmes and in partnership with other national and international actors, agencies and organisations.

Ms Sekkenes stressed that UNDP want to discuss the most appropriate, effective and efficient partnerships with likeminded partners, who are interested in working to support affected states, by

strengthening their institutions and programmes to best address the challenges posed by Explosive Remnants of War. UNDP will promote a stronger link between Mine Action and Development, to reflect a clearer development thrust that is fully aligned with the relevant outcome areas of the UNDP Strategic Plan. She also stated that another strong policy area will be leveraging the national mine action capacity and vast experience gained by countries over the last two decades, to support other affected countries through triangular and south-south cooperation schemes.

In conclusion, Ms Sekkenes welcomed this opportunity to re-engage with mine action colleagues and partners in a collective effort to support affected states in addressing the challenges posed by ERW in the aftermath of conflict, and to help achieve sustainable recovery and resilience, and avoid relapse into conflict.

In response to a question about why UNDP had changed its position, Ms Sekkenes explained that originally mine action had not been seen as a top priority for UNDP. However, after one years' experience with the new Strategy, there had been a strong push from many mine affected states for continued UNDP assistance. The UNDP mine action portfolio amounts to almost \$65 million per year and as the UNDP country offices do not have the specialized mine action staff capacity, it led to a rethink of the policy and to look at the possibility of placing specialized staff at the headquarters or regional offices.

The Chair then asked if the other UN agencies had been consulted by UNDP during this process. Mr Titov noted that DPKO worked closely with UNDP in areas like peace and security. However, he stressed that it was now important to know what UNDPs intentions were in mine action to avoid duplication or competition. He said that it was important that there was clarity in the situation, particularly with regards to what countries UNDP would or would not be able to support, in order to promote useful synergies.

Ms Judy Grayson from UNICEF said it was her understanding that UNICEF was consulted at the field level as part of the UN Country Team, and at the headquarters level was involved with discussions as part of the UN Development Group. Ms Grayson also noted that UNICEF was continuing its mine action work across the range of emergency response, risk education, advocacy, victim assistance, injury surveillance, and developing residual capacity in affected countries.

A question was then asked by the US about the role of UNMAS in counter-IED work, and whether the broadening of the UNMAS mandate to deal with this may impact on how the humanitarian United Nations agencies operate with UNMAS in the field. Ms Marcaillou responded by saying that UNMAS was responding to requests for assistance in this area, and reiterated the point of Mr Titov that UNMAS had a responsibility to protect United Nations personnel and property. On the other hand, Ms Sekkenes said that UNDP had a broader mandate than UNMAS, and that it was not easy to expand into counter-IED work without looking at the context. UNDP would welcome a discussion on the issue plus would need to consult with national mine action authorities to get their views. Ms Grayson said that this was a matter with considerable implications and would require discussion at the most senior levels of the humanitarian organizations – and not only UNICEF -- with the senior management of DPKO and UNMAS.

7. MASG Field Visit to Colombia

The Chair confirmed that the MASG field visit to Colombia would take place during the period 1 - 5 March 2015. The visit was being organized by the Japanese Mission in New York, with assistance from UNMAS.

8. Next Meeting of the MASG

The Chair indicated that the next meeting of the MASG would take place at the Japanese Mission in New York sometime in October 2015. The exact date would be set nearer the time, after consultations with partners.

9. Any Other Business

The Chair noted that the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is held on 4 April each year, and this year it will be the 10th anniversary of its declaration by the United Nations General Assembly. In recognition of this anniversary, Japan and UNMAS are planning a series of events in New York and Geneva during the week 30 March – 2 April 2015 (as the 4th April falls on a holiday weekend).

UNMAS showed a series of five slides recently received from Kobani in Syria. The slides depicted a range of IEDs that had been discovered in the area, and the Director UNMAS indicated that the UN may receive a request to provide rapid response assistance to the situation.

10. Meeting Close

The Chair thanked all the members and observers for their participation and closed the meeting at 14.30 hours.

Final version (as at 17 March 2015)