

## MINUTES

### MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP MEETING – PART 1

THURSDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2017

ROOM XXVII, UNITED NATIONS PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

#### 1. WELCOMING REMARKS BY CHAIR

The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Inigo Lambertini, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations (in New York) opened the meeting at 14.00 hours and welcomed the MASG members to the meeting. He also extended a welcome to Ms Agnès Marcaillou, the Director of UNMAS and to all MASG observer organizations.

The Chair then made a series of opening remarks. The first was to note that this was the second MASG meeting chaired by Italy in Geneva, in addition to the meeting in New York last October. Ambassador Lambertini said that he was pleased with the range of topics that had been covered and also the high level of interaction between members and observers at the meetings. He also pointed out that as the MASG first met in 1998, this year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MASG. As such, he suggested that he would look at acknowledging this milestone at the next meeting in New York in October.

Ambassador Lambertini also reminded the meeting that 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of a number of other mine action milestones – like the signing of the Ottawa Convention and also the visit of Princess Diana to Angola. 2017 also marks 20 years of UNMAS and the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and he noted that we are all currently attending the 20th Annual Meeting of National Mine Action Directors and UN advisers. Finally he said - as the slogan goes – a lot has been achieved in mine action, but there is still a lot to be done. We will hear later in the meeting from our colleagues about the challenges facing countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and others.

Next, Ambassador Lambertini said he would like to say a few words about his own country, Italy, and its recent support to mine action. Italy remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war and of explosive devices. Accordingly, Italy has been supporting mine action since 2001 with a total amount of about 45 million Euro. Thanks to the increased financial allocations approved by the Parliament in favour of Development Assistance for the years 2016-2018, Italy has slightly increased its budget for demining in 2016, bringing it to 3.3 million Euro. Thanks to the Italian funding, demining initiatives are currently being implemented in Bosnia, Colombia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Libya. Other countries are currently under consideration, depending on the security situation on the ground.

Finally, the Chair noted that the minutes of the last MASG meeting, which was held on 11 October 2016 in New York, were circulated for comment shortly after that meeting. The minutes were subsequently finalized and distributed to MASG members on the 5th November 2016 and also posted on the MASG website.

The Chair then outlined the agenda for today's meeting and highlighted that the main items involve updates and discussions from some key countries. Due to the short time available for the meeting the observer organizations had been asked to provide their regular updates in written form to the secretariat. A copy of the agenda for the meeting, the list of attendees and a copy of the main presentations are attached to these minutes.

## **2. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE IACG-MA**

The Chair invited Ms Agnès Marcaillou, the Chair of the IACG-MA and the Director UNMAS to make some opening remarks. Ms Marcaillou started by thanking Italy for their dedication to mine action and Ambassador Lambertini for his personal engagement as Chair of the MASG.

Ms Marcaillou first updated the meeting on monitoring and evaluation. She noted that findings from the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Mechanism for the United Nations Mine Action Strategy that UNMAS manages (thanks to the donor support of Australia, the Netherlands and Denmark) continue to demonstrate that the impact of mine action is concrete, tangible and measurable. It also demonstrates that the UN's commitment to an 'impact driven approach' is serious. In the latest round, data was collected from 27 affected countries and territories currently assisted by the United Nations. At least 67 per cent of identified contaminated land has been released. Contamination around vital infrastructure continues to be cleared rapidly, at a pace of 22 sites per month over the past 18 months. Risk education sessions are reaching an increasing proportion of at-risk population; up by three per cent from last year.

Next, Ms Marcaillou reminded the meeting that in the context of complex operating environments, UNMAS coordinates planning, programming and operations of mine action responses, and also provides oversight, which increases impact, cost-effectiveness and accountability. Ms Marcaillou said that the presentations later in the meeting would expand on this point, and then gave some other brief examples of UNMAS coordination and work in South Sudan, Gaza, and Lebanon. She also mentioned that victim assistance remains a core component of the United Nations work and gave some examples from Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. With regards to gender, Ms Marcaillou said that the United Nations is committed to increasing female participation in programming. She provided an example of a pilot project in Libya and also said that women comprise 30 per cent of UNMAS international staff and 20 per cent of national staff.

The Director then spoke about the online Portfolio of Mine Action Projects. The Portfolio is coordinated by UNMAS and presents a consolidated picture of the needs and priorities for 22 countries and territories affected by mines and ERW. The current Portfolio has over 200 projects ranging from the clearance of IEDs to risk awareness for children, capacity development of national institutions and socio-economic rehabilitation for survivors. Ms Marcaillou stressed that the Portfolio was an important tool to help donors better target their mine action contributions. Turning to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (UN VTF), Ms Marcaillou said that the negative funding trend of the VTF had been reversed and that there had been a 46 per cent increase in contributions over the past two years. The UN VTF continued to serve as a 'one stop shop' to support emergencies and other mine action responses where funding is not immediately available. UNMAS manages donor contributions with Umoja, which is a cutting edge enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that has streamlined the management of finance, procurement, assets and human resources across the UN system.

Finally, Ms Marcaillou thanked donors for their support to UNMAS headquarters management, which allowed UNMAS to provide technical and advisory assistance on short missions to the field, to send experts to meetings in order to share good practices and lessons learnt, and to undertake the necessary back office support. In conclusion, Ms Marcaillou thanked the donor governments for their wisdom 20 years ago in adopting the General Assembly resolution to create UNMAS and for their ongoing support.

In question time, the representative of Japan asked how UNMAS formulated mine action programmes with the other involved agencies like UNDP and UNICEF. He also asked why UNDP had changed its mine action strategy two years ago and what had been the impact of the new strategy. The representative of Finland asked to know more about the long term linkages between mine action and development.

In response to Finland, Ms Marcaillou said that interlinkages were not new and that the United Nations had always looked at mine action as a continuum and UNMAS worked closely with partner agencies. She said that some of the examples given in her opening statement demonstrated this. The new UN Secretary General had stressed the need for all UN agencies to work closer together and promoted the one system approach. In response to Japan, the Director said that the UN, through all 12 agencies in the IACG-MA, looked at situations together. UNMAS work in countries on a mandate from the Security Council or through a Peacekeeping resolution, and have branched out to become a member of the UN Country Team in certain cases. In other cases, there may be no need for UNMAS if UNDP is already assisting a country, like in Cambodia or Laos. UNMAS does not have a programme in Ukraine because UNDP and UNICEF are already there. Ms Oksana Leshchenko from UNDP then continued by saying that no 'one size fits all' and that the UN approach is coordinated through the IACG-MA. She mentioned that a new UNDP strategy titled 'Mine Action for Sustainable Development' was launched in June 2016. The strategy aligns mine action priorities to broader UNDP strategies and is people focussed, supports building national capacity and promotes international conventions. UNDP also endeavours to link its mine action work to the SDGs.

### **3. COUNTRY AND THEMATIC UPDATES**

**3.1 Afghanistan.** The first presentation focussed on the transition to national ownership of the mine action programme in Afghanistan and was given by Ms Yngvil Foss, the UNMAS Programme Manager in Afghanistan. Ms Foss started by giving some context, noting that the Afghan mine action programme started in 1989 and now over 45 humanitarian and commercial organizations employ almost 10,000 Afghans. While still one of the top four heavily affected countries, impressive results have been achieved over the years. There has been a 65% reduction in civilian casualties since 2002 and 2,751 communities and 114 districts are now free from known explosive hazards.

On the issue of transition to national ownership, Ms Foss noted that UNMAS had been asked by the Government of Afghanistan to assume management of the programme in 2002 and had maintained interim responsibility through the UNMACA programme until 2012. At that time a process was started to transfer ownership to a government agency, the Department of Mine Action Coordination, or DMAC. By October 2016 all UNMACA operational departments had transferred to DMAC strategic leadership and the UNMACA programme had closed. The transfer of other responsibilities, particularly financial control, will be complete by the end of the UNMAS exit strategy set for September 2018. Ms Foss then explained the rationale for the transfer and the

projected financial assistance needed. DMAC receives assistance from UNMAS, US-DoS and ANDMA, which has provided permanent civil servants to the staff of DMAC. Going forward DMAC is working on becoming a cost centre so that it can receive funding directly from donors. A copy of the full presentation is available on the MASG website.

In question time, the representative of the Netherlands thanked Ms Foss for presenting a success story, but asked about the recent increase in casualties in Afghanistan, and also asked how UNMAS dealt with IEDs. The representative of Canada also asked about the numbers of mines versus IEDs being dealt with by clearance operators. Ms Foss said that the casualty figures now include mine victims plus those injured by pressure plate IEDs, and the latter category account for 70% of new victims. In 2016 there were less new IED explosions than in 2015, but unfortunately more victims. DMAC recognize the difficulties in dealing with the difference between legacy (or abandoned) IEDs – which are cleared by NGOs - versus active IEDs. DMAC do not want to become drawn into the kinetic warfare and realize that the situation will likely become worse in the future.

### **3.2 Syria and Iraq**

Ms Marcaillou gave an update on the situation in Syria and Iraq. On Syria, she noted that almost every kind of conventional weapon system has been used and improvised explosive device (IED) use has also been confirmed. It is estimated that it will take decades to clear Syria. The war in Syria has been ongoing for around six years and it is estimated that it will take 30-40 years to clear explosive hazards. The use of explosive weapons continues and as of October 2016, 5.1 million people were living in highly contaminated areas and now 6.3 million people are living in these areas. As a result, the safe movement of IDPs or return of refugees is not possible and the contamination hampers the delivery of humanitarian relief. In August 2015, UNMAS Syria Response opened an office in Gaziantep in Turkey, coordinating and representing the mine action sector as the leading agency of Mine Action Sub-Cluster (MASC). UNMAS Syria Response will also maintain a desk in Amman for coordination purposes. UNMAS, and other UN agencies like UNICEF, have been undertaking risk education and conducting contamination impact surveys. In summing up, Ms Marcaillou said that the mine action sector in Syria is critical, sensitive, complex, and large. The sector requires \$44 million for a rapid and effective mine action response in 2017. The appeal includes activities inside Syria, as well as the provision of risk education to Syrian refugees living in neighbouring countries.

Turning to Iraq, Ms Marcaillou said that the presence of explosive hazards/explosive contamination in areas retaken from ISIL impedes security, stability, and humanitarian efforts and is challenging the response capacities of the Government of Iraq, the UN and the international community to respond. Over three million Iraqis are currently displaced across 3,700 locations (since 2014). Approximately 160,000 people are displaced in the Mosul area since the start of the October 2016 military campaign. The UNMAS priority areas are in line with the UN Whole of Iraq Strategic Plan 2016-18 and cover emergency response, capacity development and risk education. UNMAS is the mine action sub-cluster lead, coordinating the multi-partner emergency humanitarian response to support Protection and Cluster/humanitarian needs. The way forward includes expanding emergency response operations within high priority and newly re-taken areas, capacity development with local authorities, continued risk education and initiating victim assistance support to national authorities. An estimated US\$112 million is required for 2017, but only US\$38.5 million has been secured or pledged to-date.

The representative of the Netherlands, Ms Dorinde ten Brinke then gave some personal reflections on her recent attachment to UNMAS in Iraq for one month, as a contribution in-kind. She spent time in Erbil and then Baghdad (at the time Mosul military operation started). Ms ten Brinke said that her assignment allowed her to better understand the role of UNMAS in coordinating the work of implementing partners and she saw first-hand how clearing mines and undertaking threat assessments enabled other UN agencies to start work. She noted that there was a large need for extra clearance capability and the need to build local capacity, for example within the Iraqi police. She concluded by saying that she was grateful for the opportunity to work with UNMAS in Iraq and that it was a good thing for a donor representative to be able to do.

A number of MASG members then asked questions or gave an update. The US representative said that in Iraq the contracting company JANUS was undertaking clearance in Anbar province and Ramadi. In Mosul, JANUS had two Kurdish teams under IKMAA working in the Eastern suburbs and two Arab teams in the ISAF areas. In Syria, the US is funding the company Tetra Tech to conduct survey, marking, clearance, and training of local Syrians using third country nationals. Tetra Tech has an operational training centre in Manbij, and survey/marketing/clearance has been underway in that city since January. The US intends to expand Tetra Tech's work into Raqqa as soon as security conditions permit. With an established foothold in Manbij, Tetra Tech is poised to ramp-up for Raqqa operations quickly. The US representative then outlined the amounts of money to be provided for stabilization and clearance in both Iraq and Syria, reiterating UNMAS' needs assessment for Iraq and noting a current funding shortfall of US\$27 million for an expansion of Tetra Tech's work into Raqqa. The US thanked the 68 states that comprise the counter-ISIL coalition in Iraq and Syria, noted the key role that mine and ERW clearance played in these countries, and encouraged MASG members to prioritize mine/ERW clearance when considering additional post-ISIL stabilization contributions.

The EU representative informed the meeting that the EU was funding explosive hazard management and clearance projects in Iraq through UNMAS. In the absence of an effective national authority and the lack of international standards in place for the mitigation of this emerging threat, she highlighted the integrated or 'blended' approach applied in Iraq, a concept which the EU conceived in 2015, which brings together the military, commercial and international organizations and donors to better coordinate mine action efforts, mitigate the explosive hazards threat and magnify the effect of existing programmes. In addition, this will offer a bridge that spans stabilization and reconstruction.

The UK representative noted that one challenge in Iraq has been the accreditation of operators and that there were more advanced mine clearance capacities in the North of the country. The UK also said that most clearance activities were focussed on infrastructure and not homes, yet it is estimated that 3.3 million IDPs are living in host communities (and not camps). Finally, Finland asked about UNICEF risk education activities in government controlled areas of Syria. Ms Judy Grayson from UNICEF said that the risk education campaign scaled up in 2016 in schools, in communities, and through the media, contributing to opening the humanitarian space for others. Information stations (caravans, tents...) will be established in Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Homs to brief people undertaking controlled returns to government controlled areas

### **3.3 Boko Haram (and UNICEF activities)**

Ms Judy Grayson initially provided an overview of UNICEF activities under the heading of 'Global Public Goods for Mine Action'. This included activities such as global training courses, evaluation methodologies for mine action, technical missions and support. With the support of the Swiss and Swedish governments, UNICEF had conducted a pilot training course on 'Integrated Mine Action' for UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF, OSCE and NGOs and this course would be repeated. UNICEF will also conduct a global training on Mine/ERW Risk Education and finalize a practitioner's guide to MRE Evaluations. Ms Grayson noted that the cost of the training was not expensive and she outlined the projected funding needs. Full details of the training courses are in the power point presentation on the MASG website.

Ms Grayson then gave an update on the situation with regards to Boko Haram in Nigeria (and also neighbouring Niger, Cameroon and Chad). UNICEF had recently led four assessment missions to the area. The findings were that there was some actual mine/IED and ERW contamination, but also a high perception of contamination among humanitarian actors and the population. Initial risk education campaigns and surveys had been undertaken in the four countries but sadly the main problem comes from suicide attacks. Mr Paul Heslop from UNMAS provided some additional information by saying that UNMAS had sent a technical assessment team to Cameroon who found that 211 people had been killed and 500 wounded in recent suicide attacks. UNMAS had deployed an expert in January this year to help train the police in bomb disposal techniques. Mr Heslop noted that all four countries were providing troops to the UN peacekeeping operations in Mali, and that the bomb disposal trained troops will be of use when they return home. He also noted that this was a timely project and that risk education and training materials needed to be provided to counter the terror threat from IEDs. He concluded by informing the meeting that there would be a meeting of donors embassies in Cameroon at the end of February.

### **3.4 Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP)**

Ms Arianna Calza Bini, the Director of GMAP, informed the meeting that this was the 10th anniversary of the GMAP and she provided an update about their activities. She said that gender and diversity mainstreaming improves the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of mine action operations. In the short term, there are gains in equality and human rights in communities where mine action activities that include gender and diversity considerations are taking place. For example, new possibilities like opportunities for marginalized groups to participate in the labour market by working for a mine action organisation can have immediate direct and indirect impacts on the broader community. The GMAP programme works on demand and can provide the following range of services; assessments, capacity development, monitoring, research and technical assistance. The GMAP only has 2 ½ staff but they have worked in over 30 countries (with some repeat visits). GMAP already have eight missions planned for 2017 and Ms Calza Bini thanked Australia, Netherlands, Germany, Italy and the UK for their ongoing financial support. In the future they plan to further integrate their work into broader DDR, human security and preventing radicalization activities. A copy of the GMAP presentation is on the MASG website.

The representative of Finland thanked Ms Calza Bini for her presentation and said that she thought that gender and diversity could be a single topic for a MASG meeting in the future. However, her question was why was there a separate organization dealing with gender in mine action if the issue

was meant to be mainstreamed? In response Ms Calza Bini said that in some cases their work was part of a broader package, i.e. GMAP is part of a GICHD, UNMAS or UNDP supported programme to do base line assessments, looking at HR policies, staff composition, operations etc. The GMAP are then able to provide quite specific recommendations to the mine action programmes.

### **3.5 Regional Support to ‘Completion’**

Dr Guy Rhodes, the Director of Operations at the GICHD, outlined the Centres work in undertaking regional activities to support countries achieve their various treaty completion obligations. He started by stating that the GICHD has been supporting regional cooperation based on common languages between countries for 10 years. First was the initiation of the:

- Francophone programme in 2006, then
- Arabic Regional Cooperation Programme in 2012
- Persian Regional Cooperation Programme (POP) in 2013, and most recently
- The Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Programme (EECCA) in 2015

The regional work of the GICHD provides benefits in a number of areas. These include enabling accurate translations, sharing documentation in the same language, fundraising, addressing common challenges and providing pools of experts with the necessary language skills. Dr Rhodes also noted that regional approaches can often provide peace dividends by bringing together former adversaries at a technical level. Using regional groups can produce a multiplier effect and also promote south-south cooperation efforts. A copy of the GICHD presentation is on the MASG website.

## **4. MASG MEMBER UPDATES**

**4.1 Germany.** The representative of Germany stated that the Federal Foreign Office of Germany had made significant contributions to mine action in 2016 in the context of both humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts. 27 projects in 13 countries or regions have been funded with almost 18 million Euro. The projects covered the whole spectrum of humanitarian mine action, from risk education, victim assistance, survey and clearance to local capacity building and advocacy. The beneficiaries were international NGO's, UN organizations (UNMAS and UNICEF), the ICRC, the GICHD the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) as well as the ITF. Additionally, Germany has provided 15 million Euro for IED disposal and demining in support of its stabilization efforts for Iraq, bringing the total to about 33 million Euro for mine action projects in the financial year 2016.

In 2016 Germany has also implemented its new strategy for humanitarian mine action that focuses on 10 priority countries, but also leaves room to address urgent needs in acute crises like Syria Ukraine or Libya. The reason for this change was to focus support on bigger projects that have a more significant impact, rather than a large number of smaller projects. Another result of Germany's revised approach is that more projects can be funded over a longer term, spanning multiple financial years, to help to create more financial and planning security for partners and to avoid unnecessary gaps in funding. For 2017, Germany aims to maintain the 2016 funding level.

Germany seeks to continue its support for the 10 priority countries, and hopes to increase its support in Iraq, Syria and Libya. The focus lies on recently liberated areas formerly occupied by the IS to enable safe access for humanitarian assistance and facilitate the return of displaced persons. In this context, Germany's quick response and increase in funding for Mosul last November when access became possible, helped kick start the clearance of improvised landmines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war. Germany also remains committed to continue its support for the peace process in Colombia by funding projects covering the whole spectrum of humanitarian mine action. Furthermore, financial support for the production of the Landmine Monitor and Cluster Munition Monitor, as essential publications for the sector, will continue. The GICHD receives funding to support capacity building of five national demining centres of German priority countries to help improve coordination and raise standards. In addition to being one of the largest financial donors, Germany also remains committed to the universalization of the relevant international conventions.

**4.2 Canada.** The representative of Canada reminded the meeting that the goal of the APMBC was a mine free world by 2025. Canada highlighted the utility of the model of states working together to support affected states toward completion of their obligations, as had been done with Mozambique and shared that Canada has made a multi-year CAD\$13.8M pledge to the Global Demining Initiative for Colombia. For its 2016-2017 fiscal year, Canada doubled its financial support to Afghanistan to CAD\$8 million. Canada placed importance on gender issues and was pleased with the work done by GMAP. Canada urged other countries to take gender into account with their programming. Canada was currently in the process of refocusing its international assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable and supporting fragile states. The empowerment of women and girls and gender equality will be at the heart of its international assistance. Canada will share its new international assistance approach in the coming months.

**4.3 Japan.** The representative of Japan noted that Japan has been the largest donor to UNMAS since 2013. On 31 January Japan provided a USD\$ 11.9 million contribution to UNMAS for activities in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and DRC.

**4.4 Estonia.** Estonia thanked Italy for convening the meeting and assured the meeting of its determination to give ongoing support for humanitarian demining activities and mine action. Estonia does not have a specific demining strategy, but humanitarian demining is a priority area in the Government's new strategy for Estonia's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance (2016-2020). Estonia has increased its contributions over the past few years. This includes financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as to the clean-up of various explosive remnants of war and mine-clearance activities under several bilateral and international humanitarian projects. The Estonian government has doubled its annual contribution to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action for the mine action activities in Iraq. The money was transferred in the beginning of 2017. In addition to the six-member infantry training (including C-IED training) team in Anbar province (Iraq) and one senior officer in a strategic advisory team in Baghdad, Estonia is considering possible additional contribution measures, including capabilities for EOD/C-IED. Moreover, the MFA Estonia is currently financing a development cooperation project for developing a humanitarian demining training system in Ukraine.

**4.5 Finland.** Finland has recently restructured its mine action policy to concentrate on fragile states, and for the next four years will focus on Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Ukraine. Half the

money will be spent in the liberated areas of Iraq and Syria, particularly to counter the threat of IEDs. The support to all these countries is provided through partner organizations. The representative of Finland then explained that due to a major restructure in the management of assistance there were no funds allocated for mine action in 2016, but this will not happen again.

**4.6 Netherlands.** The representative of the Netherlands thanked the chair for a good meeting and supported the call for even more exchanges among donors. The Netherlands issued a new four year mine action programme in September 2015, which provides US\$45 million to MAG, HALO and DCA to work in 13 countries. An additional US\$10 million has been reserved for emergency situations over the four year period. Last year US\$1 million of this had been allocated for DCA in Sirte and another US\$1 million for MAG in Mosul. The Netherlands is keen to pursue developing common indicators, reports and outcomes that the mine action operators need to produce, and would like to join with other donors in the sector to develop the standardization of outcomes.

**4.7 EU.** The representative of the EU said that the EU and its 28 Member States continue to provide significant contributions to mine action projects in heavily affected countries and areas around the world. The EU is currently providing more than 35 million Euro for mine action through a range of different instruments to support mine action in Colombia, Croatia, the Gaza strip, Guinea (Conakry), India, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, the Philippines, Syria and Ukraine. The EU support covers all pillars of mine action. . The EU has also invested through its research programmes more than 20 million Euro in research and development of innovative equipment for identification and clearance of mines. The European Union is preparing a new Council Decision in support of the Ottawa Convention, which will continue the important work conducted under the previous Council Decision on universalisation, mine clearance, victim assistance and stockpile destruction.

**4.8 Sweden.** The representative of Sweden stated that their support covered three main areas. The first was support to DDG and MAG during the period 2015 – 2017 for work in six independent programmes – including South Sudan, Iraq, Libya and Myanmar. Sweden was also contributing funds to the GICHD for the next three years, and finally funding was provided to UNICEF for global training courses under their Global Public Goods programme.

**4.9 Australia.** The representative of Australia outlined Australia’s ongoing commitment to mine action. Australia had recently extended its funding agreement with the GICHD for a further three years (which included funds for GMAP, the ISU’s of the APMBC and CCM and the sponsorship programmes). Australia had identified the need for ongoing support to victim assistance and was working with HI and other partners using an integrated approach. Australia supported the ICRC Movability Foundation and also supported mine action and gender. Australia’s support for mine clearance in Cambodia was continuing, although the programme in Palau was closing. Finally the Australian Navy programme called Operation Render Safe had destroyed a quantity of UXO in the Solomon Islands last year.

**4.10 France.** The representative of France advised the meeting that France was conducting a reorganization within its administration to create a focal point and crisis centre. This will lead to an increase in funding for crisis countries, particularly for mine and ERW clearance.

**4.11 United Kingdom.** The representative of the UK advised that the UK was currently funding MAG, HALO and NPA through their three year Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP) to undertake

clearance and capacity building in eight countries – Sri Lanka, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, South Sudan and Somalia. The GMAP was due to finish this August and the UK DfID would soon consider a new programme for the next three years

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**5.1 Possible MASG Field Visit.** The Chair noted that MASG field visits had been conducted in the past e.g. to Colombia in March 2015 arranged by Japan. He suggested that another MASG visit could be undertaken and he proposed Lebanon in May. The Chair said that he would need to discuss the proposal with UNMAS and he would inform MASG members in due course.

**5.2 Next Chair of the MASG.** Ambassador Lambertini said that Italy's two year term as Chair of the MASG would finish at the end of 2017. He stated that a third year for Italy was not out of the question but that he personally would be re-assigned at the end of the year. Ambassador Lambertini encouraged other countries to consider taking on the role of Chair, and he said that he had found the role to be extremely rewarding.

## **6. NEXT MEETING OF THE MASG**

Ambassador Lambertini confirmed that Italy would chair the next meeting of the MASG in New York later in the year. He said that September was not possible due to UN commitments and November was out because Italy will be the chair of the Security Council that month. His current thoughts were to have the MASG meeting in the second half of October, but he would consult the UN calendar and UNMAS and then propose a date.

## **7. OTHER UPDATES**

As noted in his opening remarks, the Chair said that the updates from observers (OAS, GICHD, JMU/CISR and ITF) and the MASG Secretariat were requested in written form and then these would be posted on the MASG website.

## **8. CLOSING REMARKS**

In closing the meeting at 16.45 hours, Ambassador Lambertini thanked all members for their active participation. He encouraged members to consider taking over the Chair of the MASG at the end of 2017, and also to provide suggestions for ways to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the MASG in October.

End

Final as at 12 March 2017