

MINUTES - MASG MEETING

THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2022

PERMANENT MISSION OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

1. OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Chair. The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Yves Marek of France, opened the meeting at 14.00 hours and welcomed the 35 in-person participants to the meeting, along with the 34 people joining on-line. Ambassador Marek said that it was good to be meeting in-person again and welcomed everyone to the French Mission in New York. He thanked the French Ambassador, Nicolas de Riviere, and his staff for their assistance in holding the meeting. Ambassador Marek welcomed USG Jean-Pierre Lacroix to the MASG and then outlined the agenda for the meeting.

Ambassador Marek noted the effectiveness of the APMBC and CCM in the mine action sector, and the good cooperation between donors and NGOs. He said that when France took on the Chair of the MASG, the dramatic events in Ukraine and Afghanistan had not been foreseen. He recalled that the situation in Ukraine had been briefed at the Geneva MASG meeting and it would be updated again today. He also said that the MASG had held numerous consultations on Afghanistan and that UNMAS had done a great job in finding practical solutions to manage mine action in Afghanistan, considering the refusal of numerous donor states to have any relations with local authorities.

Ambassador Marek outlined some of the work undertaken by France in its role as Chair of the MASG. This included encouraging donors not to forget trying to help smaller, less affected countries to 'finish the job', such as countries like DRC, Mauritania, Senegal, Serbia, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan. He mentioned an initiative on identifying obstacles to donors in delivering their assistance and ways to work with beneficiary countries to overcome them, such as faster accreditation, issuance of visa's, custom clearance of equipment, etc. and suggested the elaboration of guidelines for beneficiary states. France had also commissioned the GICHD to undertake a study on operational efficiency in mine action, in order to make available additional tools to donors when making funding decisions. The results of this study would be briefed later in the meeting. Ambassador Marek concluded his remarks by noting that Italy would take over the chair of the MASG in 2023, and he introduced Mr Lucio Demichele, the Director of the Italian Department of Humanitarian Affairs at the MFA in Rome, who will be the next chair.

1.2 USG Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN DPO. The Chair introduced the keynote speaker, USG Jean-Pierre Lacroix, head of the UN Department of Peace Operations. Mr Lacroix congratulated Ambassador Marek on his leadership during France's tenure as chair of the MASG and welcomed Mr Demichele of Italy to the role of chair in 2023.

USG Lacroix noted that 2022 is a momentous year for mine action. In December it will be the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty for signature. It has also been 25 years since the establishment of UNMAS; and 30 years since UNDP and UNICEF started their work in mine action. Since then, the United Nations mine action sector has rendered tens of thousands of square kilometres of land safe for communities, hospitals, schools, and infrastructure. The sector has

empowered millions of people to live safely in dangerous environments by providing explosive ordnance risk education, even throughout the pandemic. USG Lacroix thanked the MASG members for contributing to these successes with their generous support for mine action.

Despite these successes, USG Lacroix noted that the number of civilian EO accidents has increased over the past year and armed, non-state groups are increasingly using IEDs to kill and harm civilians and peacekeepers. Significant new contamination is hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Ukraine, and Yemen. Extensive contamination is delaying the return of internally displaced persons and development in the region of the South Caucasus.

USG Lacroix then appealed to MASG members to reinforce their commitment to mine action by advocating for mine action in the United Nations governing bodies here in New York. UNMAS had circulated a proposal (attached with the meeting agenda) for the Mine Action Support Group to establish a Mine Action Support Group-New York chapter, open to all interested Member States – not only those making voluntary contributions to mine action - to increase member state advocacy for mine action within the Security Council, the General Assembly and in the governing bodies of the agencies, funds, and programmes. USG Lacroix felt that an advocacy-oriented group of Member States would be particularly timely to support the way forward given that the ongoing Independent Review of the UNMAS delivery model will be debated in the 77th General Assembly early next year. He noted that some MASG members were already members of Groups of Friends in areas like SSR, DDR, Rule of Law, and UN Police, and hoped that members would look favourably at the proposal.

Finally, USG Lacroix appealed for donors to increase their unearmarked funding to the mine action sector at large and, more specifically, to UNMAS. Unearmarked funding allows UNMAS to respond rapidly to crises, and also to deliver on its coordination mandate through the IACG-MA and to lead the MA AoR within the Global Protection Cluster. It has enabled UNMAS in strengthening its headquarters capacity, to design and oversee its programmes and undertake course corrections in real time when circumstances or mandates change. These funds allow UNMAS to support the development of international mine action standards and to advocate for compliance with relevant international humanitarian and human rights law. Other components of the Department have established standing capacities to enable rapid response, with excellent results. USG Lacroix said he aimed to establish a Standing Mine Action Capacity as well, to do likewise. Unearmarked funds will be used to catalyse this effort. In conclusion, ASG Lacroix wished the MASG a productive meeting.

The full statement by USG Lacroix can be found on the MASG website at the following link.

<https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>.

2. BRIEFINGS: REGIONAL MINE ACTION

2.1 Ukraine. (Note: all speakers joined the meeting via Zoom from Kyiv)

2.1.1 UNDP Ukraine – Dr Oleksandr Sushchenko, UNDP Team Leader – Energy and Environment.

Dr Sushchenko said that UNDP had been assisting Ukraine with mine action since 2016, and that they see mine action as an enabler for undertaking other activities. UNDP has provided support to the national mine action authority and helped improve national capacity, legislation, and victim assistance. He said that UNDP were planning to hold a donor meeting in Kyiv soon and then he

showed a slide outlining current donor support. Dr Sushchenko said that mine action needs are skyrocketing, but public funds are not enough, and international support is needed. By way of example, he showed a 'damage assessment and debris management' map of northern Kyiv suburbs.

2.1.2 UNDP Ukraine – Dr Guy Rhodes, CTA and MASC Coordinator. Dr Rhodes gave an update on the operational situation using a map that showed the current areas of control in Ukraine. The area around Kyiv has more stability (despite recent attacks this week) so has the opportunity for a wider set of coordinated mine action activities, whereas in the eastern regions of the country, there is greater instability with active conflict, but some EORE, EO spot task and VA activities are possible. Dr Rhodes then briefed on the UN mine action sub-cluster. He noted that there was strong Government involvement, plus 14 donors and a growing number of NGOs. He said that HALO Trust, FSD and DRC were registered and accredited to work in the country, and others were waiting accreditation. A recent survey of citizens found that exposure to mines was the third most important concern, after shelling and family separation. Dr Rhodes concluded by showing a chart of all the mine action organizations working in Ukraine at present.

2.1.3 HALO Trust Ukraine – Ms Mairi Cunningham, Programme Manager. Ms Cunningham said that HALO had been working in Ukraine since 2016 and at their peak had a workforce of 430 Ukrainian men and women. Since the invasion they have been able to maintain about 50% of that workforce and had relocated their operational areas to meet challenges. Ms Cunningham showed a map of contaminated areas, and a chart of accident data – all based on open-source reporting. Since 25 February 2022, it is estimated that from 220 accidents involving mines and ERW, 277 civilians have been injured and 127 killed. HALO are planning to expand their operations and hope to have 1,200 staff by the end of 2023. The challenges currently being faced include sector coordination, conscription, security and EO disposal (international organizations are currently excluded from using explosives to blow up mines and ERW).

Discussion. In question time, the Chair asked about the policy on the non-use of explosives by international operators and if there was an increase in casualties when displaced people return home. Ms Cunningham said that having to call the Ukrainian SESU to blow up located mines is not efficient but is workable. HALO and others are in discussions with Ukrainian authorities to have the decision changed, and they are also looking at alternate technologies for destroying mines, eg thermite charges. On risks to returning people, they had not noticed any jump in casualties, but EORE programmes are targeted at these groups.

The Director of the GICHD, noted that GICHD remained active in Ukraine. One main area of work was information management and the GICHD are the chair of the 'information sub-cluster'. GICHD is also active on EORE, including as secretary and member of the EORE advisory group. The GICHD had developed an 'Explosive Ordnance Guide for Ukraine' in both English and Ukrainian language. The second edition just came out and a third edition is in the pipeline. The GICHD, along with Switzerland and Germany, are planning a donor coordination workshop in Geneva from 28 to 30 November. This will be a technical event for Ukrainian authorities to give their perspective and a chance to match needs and expectations.

The representative of the United States then provided an update, which is quoted here.

- *On August 9, the United States announced \$89 million in new funding to support humanitarian demining efforts in Ukraine. Since that announcement, we have identified additional funding, increasing our total commitment to \$91.5 million.*
- *As part of that total commitment, on September 30 we provided \$47.6 million to our global contractor Tetra Tech to launch a large-scale train and equip project for the Government of Ukraine demining and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operators over the next year. Tetra Tech will deploy three training teams inside Ukraine to meet high-priority capacity gaps for both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Defense, while also equipping and mentoring the trained teams. Additionally, Tetra Tech will deploy liaison officers to each operator to ensure de-confliction with other donor support.*
- *Once Tetra Tech’s full-time presence in Ukraine is established, we intend to provide additional funding to construct a new demining training center, likely in western Ukraine, for advanced courses and to facilitate experience sharing between the Government of Ukraine operators, who each have their own training facilities with different capabilities.*
- *The \$47.6 million contract also includes the deployment of clearance teams and risk education teams in partnership with the local NGO Ukrainian Deminers Association (UDA).*
- *Much of the remaining funds from the \$91.5 million will support the significant increase of international NGO demining teams. It also includes a new risk education project with Spirit of Soccer, which is training Ukrainian soccer coaches to provide risk education to at-risk children during soccer clinics and tournaments.*
- *We commend UNDP for its role coordinating amongst mine action stakeholders in Ukraine through the mine action sub-cluster, such as by setting up working groups for specific issues. We intend our project with Tetra Tech to be a valuable source of information for training and equipment needs for the donor community and other operators.*
- *On-the-ground coordination continues to be critical while the international community ramps up assistance and several demining NGOs register to operate in country or attempt to access newly liberated areas in Ukraine, such as Kharkiv oblast, to support emergency response efforts. End quote*

In concluding the segment on Ukraine, the Chair thanked all the presenters and other speakers for their questions and updates.

The power point presentations on Ukraine are available on the MASG website.

2.2 South Caucuses

The Chair introduced the topic by saying that he was encouraged that the South Caucuses was on the agenda, as it had been forgotten in the past. However, since the war, interest in the region has

grown, and he had personally recently undertaken a visit to Azerbaijan where he saw the great commitment to remove mines after the war and the quality of the local mine action authority, ANAMA. Ambassador Marek expressed the hope that Azerbaijan will consider joining the APMBC.

Note: All the speakers for this topic joined the meeting via Zoom,

2.2.1 UNDP Azerbaijan – Mr Mark Buswell – Mine Action Strategic Adviser. Mr Buswell displayed a map of the Karabakh region which showed the extent of EO contamination from the past 30 years of conflict. He went on to say that the Government of Azerbaijan has set mine action as a national priority and has mobilized its resources to tackle the threat. Mine action is well coordinated and controlled by ANAMA and the government has allocated US\$80 million to mine action (as part of a state driven national reconstruction plan). The current mine action capacity includes the MoD, Ministry of Emergency Situations, the State Border Service, four commercial companies and two NGOs. Mr Buswell outlined the current priorities and needs and noted that donor funding and additional non-technical survey teams are a critical need. Pressing priorities include direct support to IDPs and a full survey of the Karabakh region.

2.2.2 UNDP Armenia – Mr Konstantin Sokolskiy – Deputy Resident Representative. Mr Sokolskiy explained that some of the EO contamination in Armenia is the consequence of the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) conflict in the early 1990's. The outbreak of conflict in NK in September 2020 resulted in additional EO contamination in conflict-affected areas, including along the border areas of Armenia. The extent of the new contamination remains yet to be assessed. Mr Sokolskiy then outlined the known levels of contamination and the type of weapons used. The role of UNDP is to support the Armenian authorities to ensure work is IMAS compliant (like information management and non-technical survey), to support coordination among partners, to raise awareness of the EO contamination issue and to expand EORE activities in the country. Finally, Mr Sokolskiy listed the partner organization working in the mine action sector.

2.2.3 HALO Trust (Nagorno Karabakh) – Ms Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper. Ms Kilpatrick-Cooper said that HALO had been working in Nagorno Karabakh (NK) for some years and the main threat at present was from cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance from the 2020 conflict. There are an estimated 15,000 IDPs wanting to return to the area, but EO and land pressure makes it difficult for them to do so. The mine action structure in NK is less established than in Azerbaijan or Armenia, and the only operators are CHD FUND, Russian Peacekeepers, HALO Trust, and the Rescue Service. The key challenges in general include access constraints (to non-Armenian or Russian passport holders), cost of living pressures and funding. On the operational side, there is a lack of mine action framework (eg no NMAS), a shortage of explosives and detonators, and security and safety constraints working close to the border. Ms Kilpatrick-Cooper said that there were many years work ahead and that the main priorities include EORE, battle area clearance, survey, clearance and increasing available capacity.

The power point presentations on South Caucasus are available on the MASG website.

2.3 Myanmar.

2.3.1 Myanmar UNICEF – Ms Nurten Yilmaz, Child Protection Specialist. Ms Nurten Yilmaz joined the meeting via Zoom and outlined the deteriorating security situation in Myanmar since the military coup in February 2021. She said that since the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2022, the number of children or maimed has risen by 288%, and 30% of these were due to landmines/ERW/IEDs. On the mine action response, Ms Yilmaz said that there is currently minimal engagement with the State Administrative Council (SAC), National Unity Government (NUG) and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). There is no national authority (NMAA) and this is likely to remain the status quo. In response to this vacuum, UNICEF establish a Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR) in December 2021. Its aim is to build national and decentralized coordination, support advocacy, support the delivery of EORE and VA, undertake surveys and assessments, monitor civilian casualties and information management. EORE and VA activities are being undertaken by nine organizations in rural areas and UNICEF hoped to increase this. However, there is no reliable internet or telephone services, no independent media, or social media available in-country. The number of IDPs is expected to increase. On the way forward, UNICEF hope to scale up service delivery on EORE and VA (demining is not possible) and encourage global and regional advocacy. Ms Yilmaz thanked the current donors to their work and stressed that multi-year funding is needed to guarantee services. In the future, UNICEF will seek support from UNMAS or UNDP.

The power point presentation on Myanmar is available on the MASG website.

3. BRIEFINGS: THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 GICHD - Progress report on the Study on Operational Efficiency in Mine Action. The Chair introduced the topic by stating that it had been one of his aims as chair to provide donors with more tools to help them when considering their funding priorities. As such, he had commissioned the GICHD to undertake a study into operational efficiency in mine action. The outline of the study was briefed at the MASG meeting in February, and now the chair invited Mr Valon Kumnova, Director of Operations at the GICHD to present the findings of the study.

Mr Kumnova said that the objective of the study was to identify and analyze how the performance of land release operations is measured with regards to efficiency, and to provide mine action stakeholders with examples of key performance indicators in different contexts. He outlined the difference between efficiency and effectiveness and stressed that this study only focused on efficiency. Mr Kumnova then outlined the scope and methodology of the study and said that data was collected from 24 countries with a wide geographic spread and limited to the period 2015 to 2019. The key performance indicators looked at in the study were.

- Cost/m² of land cleared/released
- Cost/EO item found
- M²/EO item
- M² cleared/m² released
- Asset time/EO item
- M²/deminer/day

Some of the challenges faced during the study included difficulty in obtaining data, incomplete data sets, inconsistency with calculations between programmes and divergent figures. Mr Kumnova then gave a detailed summary of the findings, such as the average cost of a square metre of land released was \$1.40 and the cost per square metre of land cleared was \$3.87. The other detailed findings are best viewed in the presentation itself. The next steps are to finish the analysis and the draft report by 31 October, send it to stakeholders for review in November and then finalize the study in December 2022.

Discussion. The representative of UNOPS thanked Mr Kumnova for the comprehensive briefing and noted that there was a lot of detail in the study. He cautioned about the use of averages and said that the study highlighted (again) the need for mine action programmes to collect standardized data. UNOPS is looking forward to the final report and in future would like to see similar work focused on impact.

The power point presentation on the Operational Efficiency study is available on the MASG website.

4. UPDATE FROM OBSERVERS

4.1 GICHD. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano provided a written update on the recent work of the GICHD in Ukraine, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Mali. The summary is available on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>. Ambassador Toscano also said that the GICHD would like to accelerate its work in the South Caucasus (possibly including Georgia) and they were watching the situation closely. The GICHD could intervene bilaterally, plus through its regional cooperation platforms. Ambassador Toscano noted that it often helped in terms of confidence building if parties to a conflict could meet to talk about humanitarian/technical issues.

4.2 ITF Enhancing Human Security. The Director of the ITF, Ambassador Tomaz Lovrencic thanked the MASG members for their support to the countries that were briefed at today's meeting. He also thanked Slovenia and Austria for the support provided through the ITF for VA activities in Ukraine and the South Caucasus. Ambassador Lovrencic said that we need to put VA higher on the mine action agenda, and that good local and regional coordination was central to the work of the ITF.

4.3 OAS. The head of mine action at the OAS, Ms Tammy Hall, said that she had just returned from a visit to Colombia. She said that there had been a massive change of political direction with the recent change of government in Colombia and that she had had encouraging discussions about mine action with the new authorities. However, despite the new government structure, mine action remains within the Office of the Presidency under the High Commissioner for Peace. Ms Hall said that given the presentation by the GICHD about costs, one of the OAS goals was to work with the new government to help find ways to reduce the very high cost of demining in Colombia. Within the Americas, the issue of mine contamination often involves common borders. Access to previously insecure areas in Colombia has prompted new reports of contamination on borders with both Ecuador and Venezuela. A side event on the mine contamination on the common border between Ecuador and Peru is being planned for the 20th MSP of the APMBC in November.

4.4 CISR JMU. Ms Nicole Neitzey from CISR announced that Ms Suzanne Fiederlien had just been confirmed as the new Director of CISR, that she herself had just been appointed as the Assistant Director. Ms Neitzey said that the next issue of the Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction would be on-line on Monday, and it has a focus on Ukraine. Attached is the link to the new issue: <https://www.jmu.edu/cisr/journal/current-issue.shtml>. CISR are always looking for Journal articles and Ms Neitzey felt that some of today's presentations would be excellent topics. The call for papers of the next edition of the Journal is at <https://www.jmu.edu/cisr/journal/cfps.shtml>

4.5 Drumlanrig Group. Mr Chris Whatley of the HALO Trust introduced himself as the representative of the Drumlanrig Group (of mine action NGOs) at today's meeting. He said that the current focus of the Group was policy coordination in Ukraine.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Other Business. No points were raised

5.2 Next Chair of the MASG. Ambassador Marek explained that when the term of Germany as MASG chair finished at the end of 2021, it was agreed that France would chair for 2022, and then Italy would take over in 2023. Ambassador Marek again welcomed Mr Lucio Demichele to the meeting and invited him to say a few words. Mr Demichele said that Italy was committed to the MASG, and he asked members for their support to shape the agenda of the MASG to increase common knowledge and actions. Mr Demichele said that he would engage with members for ideas and suggestions for the MASG in 2023. (Note: The handover of Chair will take place on 1 January 2023)

5.3 Next MASG meeting. The Chair noted that it will be up to Italy to set the date for the next meeting of the MASG. However, the practice in the past was to align the first MASG meeting of the year with the National Directors Meeting (NDM-UN), which is usually held in Geneva early in the year. When asked, the Director of UNMAS, Ms Ilene Cohn, said that in June this year the NDM-UN was held back-to-back with the APMBC Intersessionals, and that they planned to do the same again in 2023. However, discussions are still ongoing to set a date and venue for the APMBC Intersessionals. Ms Cohn undertook to advise the MASG of date for the NDM-UN as soon as it is set.

6. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair thanked MASG members and observers for their participation in the meeting, and the French Mission for their support in providing the room and Zoom link. He also thanked the USA for funding the post of MASG secretary, and thanked Mr Mansfield for his work in preparing the meeting. He also thanked all the presenters and speakers and said that the minutes of the meeting and the presentations would be made available shortly.

The meeting closed at 16.45 hours.

ANNEX A: DONOR UPDATES, MASG Meeting – 20 October 2022

(Note. These updates were given during the Closed session of the MASG but are annexed to the minutes of the Open session as a resource for observers. All speakers thanked Ambassador Marek and France for their role as Chair of the MASG over the past year, and welcomed Mr Lucio Demichele of Italy as the Chair for 2023)

1.1 Netherlands. The representative of the Netherlands said that he wished to briefly highlight the completion of the Common Theory of Change (ToC) project that was developed and operationalized over the last two years. For those who have not yet heard of it, the Common Theory of Change is an effort to arrive at a theory of change that could be used for the design of mine action programmes and activities across the whole mine action sector and would help to shape our interventions. It also comes with complementing Theories of Action and an extensive bank of indicators. The great advantage of having a sector wide theory of change and common indicators is that it would foster that we all speak the same language across the sector. The project was financed by both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and there has already been quite some interest and buy-in from operators, NMAA's, and multi-laterals.

Over the last nine months, the ToC was successfully operationalized in five pilot countries, so the tool is now ready to hand over to the community. Netherlands will mark the completion of the project with a side event during the 20th MSP next month in Geneva, where parties such as the NMAA's of Lebanon and Angola will report on their experiences with the tool. The Netherlands would like to invite everybody who's interested to visit the side event, whether physically in Geneva or online.

1.2 France. The French representative noted that France continued its involvement with mine action. French support has a strong focus on training, through the CPADD regional school in Benin, and with the regional school for the armed forces in Lebanon. France has provided around EUR10 million per year for demining, for example, to Iraq, with a special programme to assist minorities (Sinjar and Yazidi) and sub-aquatic demining in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. France has strongly reduced funding in North East Syria due to unacceptable demands placed on a French NGO. Other support includes equipment to Azerbaijan and training on IEDs in the SAHEL, support to UNMAS, and actions in Yemen, Myanmar and Ukraine (through DRC). This month, France started to support the well-functioning national programme in Mauritania, through the NGO HAMAP-Humanitaire with EUR1.6 million allocated to the Nouadhibou region.

1.3 Estonia. The Representative of Estonia said mine action is a priority area in the Government's Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Over the years, Estonia has gradually increased its contributions, including:

- financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
- support to the mine-clearance activities and the clean-up of various other explosive remnants of war under bilateral and international humanitarian projects in several regions, namely in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Palestine, Syria, and Ukraine.

In 2022, Estonia continues with its contribution to UNMAS to support the mine action programs in Iraq and Syria. In addition, the Estonian Rescue Board deminers have been cooperating with Ukraine since 2014. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has allocated EUR 337,000 to the Estonian Rescue Board to send more demining equipment to Ukraine to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Estonia is evaluating further ways to help with demining, as the desire to help in this regard remains high.

1.4 Italy. The Italian representative said that for Italy mine action is part of their humanitarian budget. In 2021, Italy doubled its contribution to EUR 8.5 million, and this level has been confirmed for 2022 (but noted that Italy had recently had a change of government). Italy works with partners such as UNMAS and the ICRC, and also with some Italian NGOs in the area of EORE and VA. Countries supported by Italy include Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Niger, Palestine, Sudan, and Syria. Italy is working in partnership with the GICHD to develop a new national Mine Action strategy, and this should be completed soon.

1.5 Germany. The representative of Germany said that Germany has been stepping up its HMA funding for Ukraine in 2022 to EUR 9.4 million and will continue to do so in 2023. At the same time, interventions in Ukraine must not come at the cost of HMA projects elsewhere. This is why Germany is continuing its support to its other priority countries at levels similar to previous years. This includes innovative projects, such as the use of drones for non-technical survey, as well as the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus to be considered across projects. In November, Germany will take over the APMBC presidency. Along with others, Germany will use this to opportunity to continue the push on universalisation of the Convention. In this context, Germany is also funding a GICHD project with regional components on the South Caucasus and ASEAN.

1.6 United States. The United States explained that its substantial increase in mine action assistance for Ukraine does not entail redirecting funding from other existing mine action programs. Rather, funding for Ukraine is supplemental, allowing for a rapid expansion of programming in Ukraine without reducing mine action assistance levels for other countries over the next year. The final U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction Program budget (which encompasses U.S. mine action assistance) for 2022 was \$254.6 million for existing programs (including \$6 million for Ukraine), plus an additional \$85.5 million in supplemental funding for Ukraine, for a total of \$340.1 million. The U.S. representative provided greater detail on their plans for Ukraine over the coming year, stressed the importance of effective donor coordination in Ukraine, and offered to make U.S. mine action resources in Ukraine available to other donors who may wish to collaborate. The United States has drafted a non-paper outlining its Ukraine mine action plan, which it is happy to share with other MASG member states wishing to receive a copy.

1.7 Canada. Currently, Canada has over CAD\$70 million invested in mine action programming globally. This includes programming in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Cambodia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Ukraine, Sri Lanka and in the Sahel region. Ukraine is a key priority for Canada and support is being provided to Tetra Tech, HALO Trust and the MoD is providing equipment to Ukraine. The representative of Canada noted that 3 December 2023 will mark the 25th anniversary of the APMBC and Canada will be arranging some activities in Geneva to mark this occasion.

1.8 European Union. The EU (EEAS) representative provided an update on demining support to the armed forces of partner countries by EU Member States under the European Peace Facility (EPF) assistance measures approved in late 2021: parts of assistance packages for Ukraine (EUR31 million),

Georgia (EUR12 million) and Moldova (EUR7 million) were earmarked for engineering equipment, including demining equipment. In addition, a full assistance package (EUR10 million) was adopted for purchases of demining equipment for the Demining Battalion of Bosnia and Herzegovina Armed Forces. The delivery of equipment is under way. To match demand and supply for all military equipment delivered by EU Member States to Ukraine under EPF within other wartime assistance measures (adopted since February 2022, total value as of October 2022: EUR3.1 billion), a coordination cell (Clearing House Cell) operates within EU Military Staff.

1.9 Australia. The Australian Government remains committed to mine action, including as a way of ensuring the implementation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, as well as relevant protocols of the CCW. Australia continues to fund mine action programs, including in risk education and/or clearance, in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Palau, Sri Lanka and Syria. Australia also continues its longstanding support for international agencies working across various areas of mine action including the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), UNMAS, UNDP and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition. The Government has commissioned a new international development policy – the policy will outline how Australia will play its part to shape a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. The Government announced the terms of reference and calls for public submissions on this policy on 14 October. This is the first long-term policy review for development assistance since 2014 – Australia’s ODA will increase in 2022-23 by more than AUD\$1 billion over four years.

1.10 Switzerland. The representative of Switzerland stated that Switzerland remains firmly committed to mine action. On a national policy level, a new plan of action on mine action drafted jointly by the Swiss MFA and MoD covering the period 2023-2026, is soon to be published. In the context of Ukraine, Switzerland regularly organises international courses within the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) in cooperation with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Switzerland is now specifically supporting the Ukrainian civilian authorities in humanitarian demining by inviting experts from Ukraine to attend these courses. Switzerland covers their travel and accommodation costs. This contribution aims to make humanitarian demining operations in Ukraine safer, more effective, and more efficient.

Final