

MINUTES of the MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

18 OCTOBER 2013

AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UN

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

1.1 Introduction by the Chair (Australia)

The Chair of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG), H.E. Ms Philippa King (Deputy Permanent Representative, Australian Mission to the UN, New York), thanked donor representatives for their participation, and welcomed UN representatives, regular observers and guests. The agenda was adopted. *A copy of the final agenda and the attendance list are attached.*

The Chair noted this would be the last MASG meeting chaired by Australia. She recalled suggestions made in the MASG study on donor coordination and felt more work could be done in this regard. The Chair also reflected on how best the MASG could support the UN Completion Initiative, suggesting it should be the aim of the MASG to regularly invite countries close to their Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) or Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) clearance deadlines to present their case. On behalf of attendees, she thanked the Secretariat for the support over the last two years. The Chair also paid tribute to the work of Mr Michael Creighton, an Australian bomb disposal expert who had recently been killed in a plane crash in Laos. Mr Creighton had been working as the operations manager for Norwegian Peoples Aid in Laos.

1.2 Statement by the Chair-designate of the MASG (Japan)

The Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Japan to the United Nations in New York, H.E. Mr Kazuyoshi Umemoto, noted Japan looked forward to chairing the MASG in 2014, particularly given the importance of mine action in terms of human security, a concept that Japan is determined to make further efforts to mainstream. He gave a brief overview of Japan's work in mine action to date, including bilateral assistance, contributions to the VTF and to UNMAS and support for the APMBC and CCM. The MASG remained a useful platform to share experiences. With the 3rd review Conference for the APMBC to be held in mid-2014, Japan wanted to use this opportunity to increase momentum within the MASG. Ambassador Umemoto said Japan intended to develop a MASG workplan for 2014 in conjunction with the Secretariat and Australia, and asked for suggestions from MASG members. Finally, he announced that in conjunction with UNMAS, Japan would hold a series of events in New York, Geneva and elsewhere to mark the next International Mine Awareness Day on 4 April 2014, highlighting the role of women in mine action.

2. UPDATES – KEY AGENCY POLICIES, PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMMES

2.1 United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA)

The Director of UNMAS, Ms Agnes Marcaillou, gave a comprehensive briefing on the work of the IACG-MA, with a focus on three areas:

- A monitoring and evaluation framework to support the UN Strategy
- The Report of the UN Secretary-General on Mine Action (A/68/305)
- Strategic priorities for UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF

Ms Marcaillou said UNMAS was in the process of developing a monitoring and evaluation system to collect, manage and analyse data to report on progress towards the strategic objectives of the UN Mine Action Strategy 2013 - 2018. Consultations with partners were held throughout the year and a framework was agreed in August 2013, although the full concept was still evolving. With adequate funding, UNMAS hoped to have a pilot of the system in place during 2014, starting with the collection of baseline data by mid-year.

She said the Secretary-General's report recommends enhanced cooperation among UN mine action partners in ammunition stockpile management, updating the United Nations policy on victim assistance, a monitoring and evaluation framework, increasing UN rapid response capacity and addressing the threats from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

Ms Marcaillou outlined the current strategic priorities for UNMAS which are to:

- Strengthen rapid response capacity
- Provide assistance requested by countries
- Strengthen support to AU in mine action
- Weapons and Explosive Hazards Management (e.g. Weapons and ammunition Stockpile Safety, Security and Management)
- Strengthen humanitarian coordination in mine action (Geneva office)
- Finalise and pilot UN monitoring and evaluation mechanism
- Support Peacekeeping and Political missions

Ms Marcaillou signalled a 56% decline in donor contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action (VTF), noting that UNMAS required US\$100 million per year from the Fund in order to meet its current obligations and commitments.

Senior Adviser from UNICEF, Ms Judy Grayson, outlined the strategic priorities for UNICEF in the area of mine action:

- expand and strengthen cadre of experts;
- strengthen injury surveillance systems;
- improve integration of MRE and victim data into operational management;
- programme guidance on victim assistance;
- standing capacity; and
- long term response

Ms Grayson said UNICEF was active in a number of countries, including Syria, providing risk education training through NGOs and developing an MRE website.

Senior Adviser from UNDP, Ms Sara Sekkenes, outlined the strategic priorities for UNDP in the area of mine action:

- strengthening of UNDP technical advisory services and capacity;
- facilitation of south-south cooperation;
- improved integration of priority setting and decision making of mine action by national actors in broader development planning; and
- increased sustainability of long term responses.

Ms Sekkenes explained that UNDP has established monitoring and evaluation systems through national authorities. UNDP views their primary role in mine action as dealing with the explosive legacies of war.

2.2 Updates from MASG Observers

2.2.1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Head of Operations at the GICHD, Dr Guy Rhodes, provided an overview of the land release system and noted that donor reporting requirements should request information on efforts to release land i.e. non-technical survey, technical survey or clearance. He advised that a new version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) had been released. Two new 'tools' had been developed, one for ammunition safety management and another for cluster munition identification. The GICHD was undertaking a study on the humanitarian impact of anti-vehicle mines, and conducting a workshop on underwater demining and UXO in the Pacific in Palau in late November, and another in Kuwait on the environmental impact of mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in the Arab world. The Chair expressed the appreciation of the MASG for the valuable work of the Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stephan Husy, whose five year term as Director ends in December.

2.2.2 James Madison University – Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR)

The Director of CISR, Dr Ken Rutherford provided a handout giving full details of the Centre's work. He noted that the latest edition of their Journal of ERW and Mine Action (Issue 17.2) had just been released (and that it poignantly contained an article by Michael Creighton).

2.2.3 Organization of American States (OAS)

The General Coordinator of the mine action program for the OAS, Mr Carl Case, gave an overview of the work of his office in assisting countries in Central America with mine action programmes. He noted that Central America had been declared 'mine safe' in 2010. The OAS expected to end their support to Ecuador and Peru by the end of 2014 - by which time they would be fully national programmes. The OAS (and UNMAS) was still supporting Colombia, where good progress had been made in complementing military and humanitarian programmes. Colombia had allowed more international actors to operate in the country, including HALO Trust. The OAS work in Colombia had also expanded to cover the control of arms, munitions and explosives.

2.2.4 International Trust Fund for Human Security (ITF)

The Ambassador of Slovenia, H.E. Mr Andrej Logar, read a brief statement on behalf of the ITF, whose work had implemented projects with a strong regional aspect in South Eastern Europe, dealing with mine and ERW clearance, and weapons collection. It had undertaken work on explosives hazard reduction in Central Asia and Afghanistan. A total of 27 governments, the EU and UNDP had supported the ITF and raised over US\$400 million in contributions since 1998. The ITF

encouraged donors to help countries in the region, such as Serbia, to achieve completion, with relatively modest assistance.

2.3 Update on the UN General Assembly Resolution on Mine Action

Polish representative, Mr Mateusz Sackowicz - on behalf of the EU - updated the meeting on the 4th Committee of the UN General Assembly Resolution on mine action. There was general agreement of mine action as a cross cutting issue, and on the link with peacebuilding and development. However, other issues such as the categories of weapons to be included in the resolution, along with reference to protection of civilians and the mention of NGOs, were more contentious. The references to the UN Strategy for Mine Action, including rapid response concepts, were generally not contentious.

2.4 Updates from Donors

2.4.1 United Kingdom

United Kingdom representative, Mr Philip Reed, explained UK's recent evaluation of their mine action strategy, and new policy paper. Both documents were provided as handouts. The lessons learned included that the UK decision to fund UN agencies was logical, but often difficult to line up with internal UK priorities. Mr Reed said the UK believed more work should be done to link mine action to development, that more effort should be given to monitoring and evaluation, and that donors should play an increasing role in coordination. The UK had recently undertaken a number of country assessments in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Laos and Cambodia. Similar assessments were planned for Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, Yemen, Myanmar and Mali.

2.4.2 Denmark

Denmark's Ambassador for Disarmament, Ambassador Uffe Balslev, said that mine action was an important part of the current Danish humanitarian action and was still based on the Danish Mine Action Strategy as revised in 2006. Danish mine action funding had declined since 2001 but Denmark was still among the top ten donors to mine action. The funding of national programmes of a yearly average of around US\$6.2 million was largely directed to Danish Mine Action NGOs and the ICRC, with a geographic focus on Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Thailand, while the Sahel and Syria could be new priorities. Of the expected multilateral donations at around US\$7.24 million for the period 2013-2015 Denmark was aiming for multi-year contributions and US\$5.3 million had been provided to the VTF for 2013-2014 as an unearmarked, two-year donation.

2.4.3 Netherlands

Netherlands representative, Ms Corina van der Laan, said the Netherlands supported mine action to promote human security and development. The Netherlands preferred to make multi-year commitments and, through a recent round of tenders, had provided US\$70 million in 15 countries over the next three years. The Netherlands was currently discussing a shift to multi-year funding with UNMAS, but wanted to better understand the division of labour between UN agencies, and to pursue the idea of a sub-group (possibly through the MASG) to regularly discuss the VTF. Ms van der Laan said the Netherlands hoped to decide on VTF funding by the end of 2013, and encouraged other donors to make multi-year, unearmarked pledges. The Chair noted it would be useful for the MASG to consider the idea of a sub-group to regularly discuss the VTF.

2.4.4 Luxembourg

Luxembourg's representative, Mr Guy Hofman, said Luxembourg was a strong supporter of UNMAS for programmes in Afghanistan, DRC, Libya and South Sudan. In 2013, they had provided an additional EURO 500,000 in unearmarked funding to UNMAS for rapid response.

2.4.5 Switzerland

Switzerland's representative, Mr Francois Garraux, said Switzerland's work was guided by its Mine Action Policy 2012 – 2105 and that they provided US\$16 million annually. Switzerland believed there was still a lot of work to do in the sector, but also noted the increased public scrutiny in Switzerland on the use of funds. Mr Garraux raised a number of questions, including around the evolution of mine action over the past 10 years. Switzerland supported UN agencies and the introduction of monitoring and evaluation in the UN Strategy, but also welcomed a stronger clarification of agency roles.

2.4.6 Japan

Japanese representative, Mr. Naoto Hisajima, gave a brief update on Japan's mine action funding, which is guided by its work on human security. Japan provided assistance to a number of countries through the VTF, including to fund the recent training of peacekeeping troops in Benin. Japan also funded bilaterally; Lao PDR was the largest recipient with US\$15 million in 2012. Japan supported the strategy of the Government of Lao PDR which links mine action with development; and noted the significant drop in new victims in Lao PDR (from 300 in 2008 to 56 in 2012). Japan was also supporting ERW projects in the Pacific, such as underwater clearance in Palau and UXO clearance in Solomon Islands.

2.4.7 Australia

Australian representative, Ms Allannah Kjellgren, explained Australia was approaching the end of the fourth year of implementing its five-year Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program 2010-14. A new strategy for mine action in the Australian aid program would likely cover the period 2015 to 2019. Consultations on the draft strategy are expected to take place during 2014. The Australian Government had set a new direction for Australia's aid program. The aid program will promote Australia's national interests through contributing to international economic growth and poverty reduction. It will be designed and implemented to support Australian foreign and trade policy in the Indo-Pacific region, especially the South Pacific and South East Asia. Australia's future support for mine action will be considered within the context of these revised priorities.

2.4.8 Analysis of donor mine action policies and strategies

MASG Secretariat representative, Mr Ian Mansfield, provided an overview of recent studies on donor mine action. This followed agreement at the MASG meeting of April 2013 that it would be useful for the Secretariat to undertake a short review of the current mine action policies or strategies guiding the funding of MASG members.

At present, only six MASG members have a current, dedicated mine action policy or strategy. They are: Australia, Denmark, EU, Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. The US had produced an annual report on its work for the past 20 years which contain elements of its future funding priorities. Five donors in the top 12 (Canada, Germany, Japan, Norway and Sweden) along with two others (Estonia and Spain) stated that their contributions to mine action were covered by broader humanitarian or

development policies. Some of these policies mention mine action specifically, while others do not. While most policies state that the donor responds in both humanitarian and development contexts, the weighting is towards humanitarian responses. A review of the main recipient countries in 2011 would suggest that humanitarian assistance was the major driver e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Cambodia, Angola, Sudan and Lebanon.

Almost all members of the MASG were States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). However, only five members state in their policies that they 'prefer' or 'encourage' recipient countries to join these conventions in order to receive funding – Australia, EU, Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. Of the five pillars of mine action, most donors fund clearance, risk education (MRE) and victim assistance work. Less than half of the countries with mine action strategies mention stockpile destruction or advocacy as being part of their policy or strategy.

Almost all MASG members funded aspects of the United Nations mine action work. Less emphasis was placed on mine action supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – noted in only three donor strategies. The gender aspect of mine action was mentioned by around one third of donors.

The Chair mentioned that a more detailed country-by-country summary had also been prepared by the Secretariat, and participants agreed this should be circulated to all MASG members as a draft for their comment.

3. CHANGING CONTEXT AND PRIORITIES OF MINE ACTION

The Chair recalled that, in recent meetings, the MASG has been considering the concept of mine action completion, particularly with regard to the obligation of affected countries to the APMBC and the CCM.

3.1 Senegal

Director of the National Mine Action Programme of Senegal, Mr Barham Thaim, gave an overview of the landmine problem in Senegal, the progress made in recent years and the challenges faced. Senegal had joined the APMBC in 1999, and in 2008 had been granted a seven year extension. Mr Thiam said there were three operators working in the country. Senegal could clear the remaining 1,735,00 square metres of contaminated lands in the remaining 21 months, as long as the financial resources were made available. He said the Senegalese Government had allocated US\$2.3 million for 2013-2015 but needed an additional US\$10 million to meet its APMBC Article 5 clearance obligation.

3.2 Lebanon

Director of the Lebanon Mine Action Centre, General Imad Odeimi, provided an update on the situation in Lebanon, particularly with regard to CCM clearance obligations. Lebanon had joined the CCM and had hosted the 2nd Meeting of States Parties. He said they had cleared almost 70% of the agricultural land previously contaminated by cluster munitions and had been on track to meet their cluster munition clearance target of 2016. However, the recent conflict in Syria had affected this progress, with new areas of contamination reported and a growing shortage of funds. General Odeimi regretfully advised the meeting that Lebanon would not be able to meet the 2016 deadline

without additional financial resources and more clearance teams. Lebanon estimates they need US\$19 million to complete the task, on top of the available US\$10m.

3.3 Mozambique

UNDP representative, Mr Justus Okoko, conveyed an update from the National Demining Institute of Mozambique. Mozambique had made good progress over the years in clearing landmines and will be in the final stages of clearance in 2014. Over the years Mozambique had the support of 20 international partners, and procedures had constantly improved. The district by district approach that had been adopted allowed for clear monitoring, and five of Mozambique's ten provinces were now mine free. The Mozambique mine action plan for 2014 identified the need for US\$13 million to achieve its target, but currently had an US\$8 million shortfall. The main operational challenges were clearing around power lines and along the border with Zimbabwe. Mozambique would host the 3rd Review Conference for the APMBC in mid-2014.

3.4 Afghanistan

UNMAS Director, Ms Agnes Marcaillou, said Afghanistan had an excellent mine action programme that had been transferred from UNMAS to the Government of Afghanistan in 2012. Afghanistan had previously submitted a detailed extension request for its APMBC obligations and needed \$85 million a year for the next three years to complete the task by 2019. However, she said funding for Afghanistan had decreased dramatically and the Vice President of Afghanistan had written to donors urgently seeking funds to allow it to meet its APMBC obligations.

3.5 Management of residual ERW contamination - lessons learnt from Europe

Dr Guy Rhodes of the GICHD, outlined a new study being undertaken to identify the lessons learned by countries affected by ERW after World War II, including Germany and the UK. Both countries still find significant quantities of ordnance annually, particularly large aircraft bombs, and have procedures in place to deal with them. The GICHD had completed a scoping study and would now like to expand this study in 2104 to cover additional countries. Further analysis and the development of risk management models would be useful for other affected countries, particularly those in SE Asia (Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia) that will still have to deal with a residual ERW problem long after their APMBC and CCM obligations have been met. The practices and policies in place in the UK, Germany, Japan and elsewhere for managing residual contamination have great relevance. The GICHD was seeking an additional US\$250,000 to complete the study and to run country specific and regional workshops to explore and plan long management of contamination with governments and partners in SE Asia.

3.7 Stockpile management and the Prevention of Accidental Explosions

Assistant Secretary General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Mr Dmitry Titov, thanked MASG members for their support and for focussing on key issues. He said mine action was a 'flagship' issue for DPKO and the United Nations.

Mr Titov said there had been over 500 unintended explosions in ammunition storage facilities around the world between 1979 and 2013. He noted the Security Council resolution 2117 (2013) had recognized the value of effective physical security and management of SALW and ammunition. The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), which had been prepared by UNODA with technical expertise from UNMAS, had also been welcomed in the General Assembly resolution

66/42. UNMAS had received requests to provide assistance with improving ammunition storage in the recent past, and had done so in countries such as Libya, DRC, Cote D'Ivoire and Mali. He said UNMAS had the expertise, but could do more with financial assistance and technical support from donors. He felt that any increased UNMAS involvement would be an incremental approach. Mr Titov encouraged donor views and leadership on the issue - such as offering to chair a proposed Geneva expert's level meeting.

On the drafting of the current General Assembly resolution, Mr Titov said the Secretary-General's report already mentioned ammunition storage, victim assistance, monitoring and evaluation, along with rapid response. He said UNMAS was already doing these things and that the resolution needed appropriate language to recognize this and give tacit approval to its work, including dealing with IEDs.

The Chair thanked Mr Titov for his comments, agreed that more understanding was needed for some issues and supported the idea of the Geneva meeting. She also said Australia had been pleased to see reference to ammunition management in the Security Council resolutions.

Meeting participants raised a number of questions – including on the relationship between UNMAS and UNODA, and a possible name change for UNMAS to reflect changes in its work. Mr Titov said landmines and other ERW were still a major threat and required ongoing work. However these new issues were emerging and UNMAS was dealing with them with specific expertise. He noted “UNMAS” was a ‘brand name’ even if the words in the name did not reflect all activities undertaken. He believed it would need a global event, such as a meeting with all partners, to drive such a change.

UNMAS, Ms Agnes Marcaillou, provided briefings on the situations in the Central African republic (CAR), Mali and Libya. UNMAS explained it had the capability and experience to respond quickly to these situations. The response was based on three strategic areas: protection of civilians and assisting humanitarian access; providing technical assistance to national authorities; and providing explosive threat mitigation assistance. UNMAS stressed that in order to be able to respond effectively, it needed unearmarked funds in the VTF and the continued support of technical partner organizations (including from Francophone partners).

4. MASG MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Report from MASG Secretariat

Mr Mansfield outlined the work he had undertaken since the April meeting, including developing a draft workplan for 2014. The Chair said this would need to be discussed with Japan as the incoming chair.

4.2 Future of the MASG Secretariat post

The Chair noted that UK funding for the Secretariat function finished at the end of 2013. She was in discussion with a number of members to secure funding for 2014, and noted the establishment of the Secretariat had been of great assistance to the Chair.

4.3 MASG Membership

Mr Mansfield said the Secretariat had undertaken a comparison study of known mine action donors against current MASG members, and had identified a number of donors who were not MASG

members. It was agreed that the current and incoming Chairs would discuss the matter.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 African Union / UNMAS partnership

Ms Marcaillou briefed the meeting on moves to develop an African Union (AU) strategy for mine action. She said UNMAS had seconded an official to the AU to assist them. One idea is to incorporate the two training centres in Africa (Kenya and Benin) as centres of reference for future training of African peacekeeping troops in mine action. The AU had sent a Note Verbale to UNMAS seeking their assistance in strengthening AU capacity. UNMAS may explore a new initiative involving a triangular arrangement between the AU, the EU and the UN. The Chair noted this would add to the trend of UN-AU peace and security cooperation in a number of areas.

6. UPDATE BY MR HERVE LADSOUS, USG DPKO

UN Under-Secretary-General of DPKO, Mr Herve Ladsous, gave an update on a range of issues. He noted the importance of MASG and the accomplishments of UNMAS. He suggested that mine action had evolved and that UNMAS provided leadership both within the UN system and the wider mine action community. On the question of the appropriateness of 'mine action' as a term, he acknowledged that in the 1990s landmines were the main issue, but today the sector deals with a much wider range of issues, such as ERW and ammunition management. He suggested it may be time to reflect on this issue and coin a new phrase. Mr Ladsous said that poorly managed ammunition stocks were a major problem in many countries, such as the DRC and Liberia, and this was linked with Security Sector Reform programmes.

On implementing the current UN Mine Action Strategy, Mr Ladsous said UNMAS could not deliver without adequate funding. He re-iterated the point that UNMAS needed US\$100 million in the VTF each year to achieve its targets. He acknowledged that times were difficult for many donor countries, but hoped MASG members could convince their governments that mine action was a good investment.

On the question of Syria, Mr Ladsous said that while the recent focus had been on chemical weapons, and the use of them was extremely disturbing, they probably only accounted for 1% of casualties in the ongoing conflict. He said in the past two years there had been thousands of casualties due to the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons and ERW. He stressed that the UN needed to be prepared, and although he felt that the UN would not lead any initial peacekeeping operation, the question of ERW risk education and clearance on a large scale would need to be addressed.

7. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair thanked all MASG members, observers and guests for their active participation in the meeting. She said the draft minutes would be distributed in due course and relevant presentations posted on the website. The Chair concluded by saying Australia had enjoyed its tenure as MASG chair, thanked the UN agencies for their support, and looked forward to working with Japan in the transition as MASG chair.

Final - 26 Dec 13.