



United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

2018 Group of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II on mines, booby-traps and other devices, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

11-12 June, Geneva

Madam President¹,

The asymmetric nature of modern conflicts has brought the violence and destruction, once reserved for remote battlefields, to the doorstep of innocent civilians. Non-state armed groups have turned IEDs into a weapon of choice.

IEDs are left in homes – preventing families from returning; they are left in streets and on bridges – preventing commerce from resuming; they litter the schools and hospitals, water treatment plants and wells – preventing a return to normalcy for populations desperate to resume living.

Protecting civilians, aid workers, and peacekeepers from the deadly threat of IEDs, is a continued priority of the United Nations Secretary-General. In his Agenda on Disarmament, recently launched in Geneva, the Secretary-General called for action under the leadership of UNMAS, to promote strengthened and coherent United Nations inter-agency coordination on IEDs “to ensure a whole-of-system approach.” I wish to state here the commitment of UNMAS in ensuring that this action is implemented.

Please allow me to add a few remarks and inform the meeting on the recent progress, in particular in ensuring that the United Nations is prepared to respond safely, effectively and in a timely manner to IED threats and protect civilians caught up in highly contaminated environments.

¹ Ambassador Alice Guitton, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament



Most recently, the United Nations has developed the Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) Standards to fill a gap in the technical guidance required to respond to the expanding and complex IED problem.

The Standards aim at ensuring uniformity and technical specificity related to IED disposal capability. The Standards provide guidance on how to carry out IED disposal planning, the competencies and associated training and equipment required to conduct IED disposal operations, as well as the appropriate approaches to IED clearance in rural and urban areas, IED information management and IED risk education.

Dear colleagues,

Whilst the UN IEDD Standards apply to peacekeeping and security situations, the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) provide the framework for the humanitarian response of all explosive devices cleared under humanitarian conditions.

As Chair of the IMAS Review Board, UNMAS has initiated the process of updating IMAS to address IED clearance in such contexts.

The Review Board has established seven working groups to focus on the following topics: terminology; required competencies for humanitarian IED disposal; survey and land release; urban IEDs; risk education; risk/threat assessment; and medical issues.

In July at the next meeting in Geneva, the groups will present progress to date and outline the way forward. As recommended by Member States, technical guidance from UN IEDD Standards already informs the ongoing update of IMAS to ensure that these standards are complementary.

As the threat by IEDs has grown, so too has the need for focused risk education plans. Because IEDs can be constructed from most household goods and can be contained within everyday items ranging from plastic jugs to children's toys, our approach to IED Risk Education must be different from traditional mine risk education.



In the case of IEDs, the best risk education is often not dependent on the identification of a specific object or device, as is the case with a landmine - but rather on learning to identify the presence of the abnormal and teaching at-risk communities to recognize items that are out of place in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Since 2016 UNMAS has provided IED Risk Education to over 400,000 people in Iraq, including Baraa and her family whom returned to their home in Ramadi.

At an IDP camp, Baraa received IED risk education from UNMAS implementing partners – when she returned home, Baraa approached her house with caution. Whilst checking the kitchen she spotted wires sticking out from her mud-oven, which she was sure had not been there when she left. Remembering the information received in the Risk Education session and how anything could be turned into an IED, Baraa made sure to get out of the kitchen without touching anything. After informing a local policeman, an EOD team was called and cleared the house – finding a total of four IEDs.

This is just one of the many untold success stories about how we can protect those most vulnerable.

Thank you.