



**Twenty-first Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II  
on mines, booby-traps and other devices**

**Statement under agenda item 10 – Improvised Explosive Devices  
(12 November 2019)**

Mr. President,<sup>1</sup>

I am delivering the following statement in my capacity as Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service. At the outset I want to congratulate you on your election and assure you of UNMAS solid support to your important work.

In 2018, more than 5,000 casualties from explosive ordnance were recorded worldwide, with Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Mali, Colombia, Ukraine and Somalia ranking among the most affected countries. I recently visited Syria, where an average of 184 explosive incidents has been recorded every day in 2019 and more than 11 million people are affected by explosive ordnance contamination.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) account for a large number of civilian casualties and often inflict even more devastating injuries than traditional anti-personnel landmines.<sup>2</sup> In their various forms, they aim at killing several individuals in a single incident.

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<sup>1</sup> Zbigniew Czech, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations Office at Geneva, President-designate of the Twenty-first Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

<sup>2</sup> [“Improvised explosive devices inflict much more serious injuries than land mines,”](#) *BMJ* (23 August 2017).

In addition to the human cost, there is an extra financial cost to detecting and defusing IEDs. Due to their unpredictable nature, their increased use, lethality, sophistication and evolving designs, IEDs present technical and operational challenges requiring experts to significantly adjust their operations, equipment and training.

UNMAS plays a leadership role in support of the international community's efforts to mitigate this growing threat, including in the APII. Last August, UNMAS shared its experience and expertise during the Meeting of Experts.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the continued support of UNMAS to the co-ordinators of France and Colombia in leading the important work of High Contracting Parties on IEDs within this Protocol, and will continue to support the implementation of their proposals.

Excellencies,

As recommended by the Secretary-General, in his "Saving Lives" agenda, UNMAS is leading an UN inter-agency coordination on IEDs to ensure a strengthened and coherent whole-of-system approach.

This will strengthen the overall effectiveness of the UN response in key areas, strategic planning, prevention and protection responses in humanitarian and peace operation settings, and also threat assessment, staff safety and security and policy development.

A number of UNMAS initiatives support the mine action sector at large:

1. UNMAS' IED Threat Mitigation Advisory Team, provides expert assistance to the mine action sector as a whole: affected States, regional arrangements, UN and operators, it also produced, for the Department of Peace Operations, IED-specific guidance and training modules<sup>3</sup> for the pre-deployment training of peacekeepers. I would like to appeal to States in a position to do so to contribute to this international capacity established by and within UNMAS that many of you had called for.
2. UNMAS continues to innovate and create new avenues with its ground-breaking road map on smart improvised explosive device threat mitigation technologies. All IED interested stakeholders, whether affected countries, regional organizations, private sector or academia, partnering with UNMAS in this undertaking, will be connected through this platform. In a collaborative manner, UNMAS will facilitate threat assessments, identify suitable technologies and connect with other ongoing threat mitigation initiatives.
3. Lastly, under UNMAS leadership, three new International Mine Action Standards on risk management, building clearance and the disposal of improvised explosive devices have been elaborated and endorsed by the United Nations senior leadership. They complement the 2018 UN improvised explosive device disposal standards and strengthen safety of IED disposal personnel and cost effectiveness of related operations.

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<sup>3</sup> DPKO/DFS Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings, IED Threat Mitigation Military and Police Handbook, UNMAS IED Lexicon, United Nations IED Disposal Standards.

Excellencies,

UNMAS takes great pride in its contribution to the mitigation of IED threats, the reduction of their humanitarian impact on civilians, of their impact on the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance and on the operational effectiveness of peace operations, just to name a few.

The reduction of IED-related casualties in the ranks of AMISOM and the humanitarian work carried out by UNMAS in Iraq, just to name a few, are tangible evidence of the importance of threat mitigation, as well as of the importance of pursuing the work of this Committee. In close cooperation with the Government of Iraq, since August 2016, UNMAS has surveyed 288 million square meters of land retaken from Da'esh, and has cleared over 2,400 IEDs, 17 tons of homemade explosives and 1,000 suicide belts – many of which were removed from human remains. Surveying and clearing several schools from IEDs and booby-traps in Mosul, enabling UNICEF and UNDP to renovate and reopen schools and thousands of children to catch up on missed school years.

Mitigating and reducing the risks posed by IEDs is one of the strategic priorities of the UN Mine Action Strategy. I want to assure you of UNMAS strong commitment to contributing to the work in APII, its Expert Group as well as to promoting its Universalization and implementation. I want also to assure you that UNMAS will continue to participate in other fora discussing the IED threat and also support sharing of information across fora with a view to ensuring complementarity of efforts.

I thank you.