

Remarks by Mr. Ladsous

Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

Meeting of the Mine Action Support Group, 18 October 2013

*(Meeting chaired by the Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN:
H.E. Gary Quinlan; and Deputy Permanent Representative: Philippa King)*

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is always a pleasure to address the members of such an important group. Your countries' support to mine action continues to be of crucial importance to the United Nations.

In the past few days, I am informed that many fruitful discussions have taken place. As you know, I am very committed to maintaining an atmosphere of trust and dialogue with all member states. Moreover, I consider that regular meetings with 'investors' constitute a pre-requisite for a meaningful partnership.

Several times a week, ASG Titov and I witness first hand the accomplishments of UNMAS and the positive change it delivers in affected countries and communities.

This involves a broad spectrum of activities, from the clearance of unexploded ordnance in the immediate aftermath of conflicts such in Mali, raising awareness of the dangers among returning refugees or IDPs, or data and mapping that ensure mine action operations are correctly focused on humanitarian priorities, and humanitarian actors are aware of where they can safely move.

Despite all these achievements, reflected in the UNMAS annual report, there is no room for complacency. New armed conflicts in Libya, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic have exposed civilians to threats from landmines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices. Soon, UNMAS will inform us of the extent and nature of the unexploded ordnance contamination in the Central African Republic.

The United Nations, UNMAS in particular, has been increasingly requested to ensure people's security and to respond to humanitarian emergency needs.

Today, UNMAS has been mandated or requested to support and lead coordination in 18 operations, in increasingly complex and challenging contexts.

Restoring the essential role of mine action within the United Nations and global frameworks is part of the challenge we collectively face. Indeed, the mine action landscape has been undergoing significant evolution over the past two years. As this takes place, UNMAS is providing leadership to the UN and the mine action community at large towards continual improvement.

I often hear, from member states and partners, that the term “mine action”, established in the mid-90’s when anti-personnel landmines were the international community’s biggest concern, may be misleading.

“Demining” “anti-personnel mines” are still at the core of the UN actions but are now one of the various concerns that need to be addressed. Has the term “Mine Action” run its course? As the mine action community now makes communities safe from a range of explosive hazards, time may have come for Member States to reflect on this issue and advise. Should this be

the case, I could ask UNMAS to join your reflection and will be ready, personally, to assist if need be.

Whether in a mission setting or following a humanitarian emergency, the rapid response teams of UNMAS have enabled an effective response to be provided in the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Palestine, Libya and Mali.

In practical terms, this means that UNMAS is able, at any time and without delay, to deploy specialized personnel and technical equipment to undertake life saving activities.

I would like to echo the call of the UN Secretary General and ask you to make the case to your governments to support UNMAS Rapid Response with multi-year funding commitments, of at least \$10 million per year.

This shall be regarded as a priority.

Synergies between mine action and other activities, such as security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, have been

strengthened by the effective use of specialized skills and tools against the threats of unsecured and/or poorly managed ammunition.

It is important to recall that without **your countries'** funding, UNMAS would not be able to deliver on **your countries'** requests. In the past 18 months, UNMAS has endeavored to respond to **your** concerns. For example, providing advice to Member States on emerging threats such as IEDs and new technologies.

UNMAS has also led an extensive consultation process to develop the new United Nations Mine Action Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism, a transparency tool which will serve all mine action stakeholders.

These accomplishments carry a price tag of \$100 million per year.

I am quite aware of the difficulties that countries face in the current economic environment. Nevertheless, I cannot but be alarmed that this year, funding is at record low, and that a number of countries which are

traditionally significant contributors to UN activities seem to have placed mine action lower in their agendas.

Mine Action achievements are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound. Mine Action is SMART. I am confident that you will convey to your respective governments how important it is to invest in this undertaking through the United Nations Trust Fund.

I thank you.