

**Draft Opening Remarks**  
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**5 February 2019**

**Mr. Chairman,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and gentlemen,**

***Introduction***

I am very pleased to open the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers.

**[UN Mine action Strategy 2019 - 2023]**

I would like to start by congratulating the mine action community on the launching of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2019-2023. The Strategy is a result of very hard work by all mine action partners and stakeholders. As the Secretary-General remarked: *“The Strategy is practical, needs-driven, people-centred and resource-efficient.”*

Indeed, the new Strategy supports a coherent and effective system-wide response – ensuring the integration of mine action across broader humanitarian, human rights, peace and security, and development responses. It further supports the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The Strategy incorporates a Monitoring and Evaluation framework, based on which the UN will report to the General Assembly biennially. This ensures that the UN mine action community will remain accountable and transparent.

*[Mine Action as Humanitarian Action]*

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Mine action is fundamentally a humanitarian action.

The new Strategy includes as one of its core outcomes addressing the needs of survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance. Too often, resources are not in place to ensure survivors of armed conflict receive the care they need over the long-term. The lack of programmes that guarantee access to medical assistance and strategies of reintegration into the communities often prevent survivors from reigniting meaningful lives where their dignity is respected.

The normative frameworks in mine action – including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and associated Protocols and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – urge all Governments to integrate victims and survivors of conflict back into society while providing access to medical care. Strategic Outcome 2 in the new Strategy was specifically designed to help all States prioritize the long-term planning required to ensure that all survivors have access to education, employment, goods and services.

This is a crucial pillar of mine action that has been underscored by Member States time and time again yet **remains critically underfunded**. Only the combined efforts of Governments, UN and civil society will make it possible to ensure the required assistance is provided to survivors.

Another avenue the United Nations is exploring in the context of responding to survivors' needs is the landmark campaign "Safe Ground," which will be

launched on the International Day of Mine Action and Mine Awareness. Under this campaign, partners will build sports facilities such as soccer stadiums on grounds that have been cleared from explosive devices, in order to promote confidence-building, engage the youth and generate resources for survivors of armed conflict.

*[Understanding IEDs]*

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The importance of addressing the threat posed by explosive devices and particularly Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) is highlighted in the UN Secretary-General Agenda for Disarmament.

In 2017, more than 14,000 IED-related deaths and injuries in nearly 50 countries were reported. Already in 2019, we have had too many attacks on civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers globally.

The United Nations Mine Action Service is spearheading the UN response to mitigate the threat of IEDs. Under its lead, more effective strategies to defeat these devices are being developed. These efforts are based on the recently developed UN IED Device Disposal Standards and other doctrines. In particular, the SMART IED Threat Mitigation Technology Roadmap serves United Nations missions and HQ by providing an implementation strategy to the IED Threat Mitigation policy and delivering related expertise.

However, more needs to be done jointly to address an increasingly complex threat environment in which the United Nations and other humanitarian and stabilization actors operate. I urge all Governments, UN and other actors to redouble efforts aimed at bridging the gap in IED Threat Mitigation measures,

by sharing information on current and future threat and proactively identifying and meeting the needs of all entities operating in missions.

***[Conclusion]***

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The United Nations has re-confirmed its commitment and vision to a world free from the threat of mines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and IEDs, a world where survivors are fully integrated as equal members of their societies. It is our duty this week to work together to tackle emerging issues, to exchange best practices and lessons learned, to forge partnerships and to pledge resources to achieve these goals.

I thank you for your attention.