

MINUTES

MASG MEETING -OPEN SESSION

ZOOM – TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2021

1. OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Chair. The Chair of the MASG, Mr Wolfgang Bindseil, opened the Zoom meeting at 14.00 hours (CEST) and welcomed the 70 participants. The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting and made the following points: The use of improvised landmines is increasing, and we need to address this issue using all avenues available; political, diplomatic, technological, and institutional. He noted that the mine action sector has made progress in the fight against COVID 19, but challenges remain. The pandemic has led to increased competition for funding, and this has affected national mine action programmes, as well as donors. Mr Bindseil said that this would be the last MASG to be chaired by Germany, and that it was unfortunate that three of the four meetings held during the German chair were by Zoom. The pandemic also meant that Germany could not achieve all the activities it had planned, like a field visit. Mr Bindseil then announced that France would take over the Chair of the MASG, with effect from 1 January 2022. Finally, he thanked the Acting Director of UNMAS, Ms Ilene Cohn, for the excellent cooperation between UNMAS and the MASG. This cooperation had led to greater interaction between the donors and the UN system. Some examples of this were the MASG Chair being invited to be part of the IMAS Steering Group, and the MASG being invited to participate in meetings of the MA AoR of the UN Protection Cluster. The Chair concluded by inviting the Acting Director UNMAS to address the meeting.

1.2 Acting Director UNMAS. Ms Ilene Cohn thanked Germany for their leadership in chairing the MASG over the past two years, and for their unwavering commitment to mine action, including hosting the 2021 NDM-UN. Ms Cohn also welcomed France as the next Chair and said she looked forward to continuing the strong working relationship between UNMAS and the MASG. She thanked all donors and partners represented here; without whose flexibility and support the sector would not have been able to deliver during the pandemic. Taking stock of the current situation, Ms Cohn referred to the Report of the Secretary-General on Mine Action, which she had presented to the Fourth Committee last week. She noted some highlights, like the reduction in civilian casualties caused by explosive ordnance in 2020 (which might be linked to COVID-19 related mobility and data-collection restrictions), the value of clearance efforts worldwide, and the wide reach of risk education programmes. However, many challenges remain, as some 60 Member States and territories are still contaminated with anti-personnel landmines and ERW.

Ms Cohn noted that the Independent Strategic Review (ISR) on the UN peacekeeping operations' response to IEDs has had its scope expanded to consider the ability of the UN to mitigate the threat of EO on civilian populations, as well as on peace operations. The ISR will submit a report to the Security Council on 15 December 2021. This year's resolution on Assistance in Mine Action is currently being drafted and Ms Cohn thanked the MASG member states for their constructive engagement in the process. She hopes that the Resolution will include strengthened language on

the rights and needs of victims, as well as highlight the positive impact made by various coordination bodies, like the MA AoR and the EORE Advisory Group.

Looking ahead, Ms Cohn said that the UN needed the support and partnership of the MASG in areas where momentum has stalled, or where new threats are emerging, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Gaza, Sudan, and Syria. UNMAS encourages unearmarked and multi-annual contributions to enable them to undertake rapid responses to situations like in Nagorno-Karabakh, Niger, and northern Ethiopia, and to support countries that struggle to fundraise due to a lack of political interest. In conclusion, Ms Cohn said that UNMAS encouraged the MASG to undertake a field visit and that UNMAS could provide support. The NDM-UN is being planned for mid-May 2022 in Geneva, and that she was looking forward to the next MASG meeting being held in the margins. Finally, Ms Cohn recognized the many roles played by donors – in the Security Council, in the 4th and 5th Committees of the General Assembly, and in the Conference on Disarmament and encouraged members to bring attention to mine action in all those fora.

The full speaking notes of the Acting Director UNMAS are available on the MASG webpage.

2. BRIEFINGS: REGIONAL MINE ACTION

2.1 Afghanistan. Mr Paul Heslop, the UN Mine Action Programme Manager for Afghanistan, and Mr James Cowan, the CEO of HALO Trust, gave a joint presentation on the situation in Afghanistan. Mr Heslop started by giving some recent statistics that showed the number of civilian casualties caused by improvised landmines and UXO had increased dramatically over the past 10 years. He continued by saying that the situation in Afghanistan was evolving quickly since the Taliban takeover on 12 August. However, the mine action sector was resilient and as of today, 80% of field deminers were back at work, mainly due to the efforts of local Afghan staff. One major concern was that the former Afghan government's Department of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) was no longer fully functioning, mainly due to a lack of funds. In response, and in consultation with key stakeholders, the UN has established on a temporary basis the Emergency Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (EMACCA) to perform some of the key coordination functions for the sector, and to manage the national data base. The division of responsibility between the EMACCA and DMAC is evolving, and the key points are;

- ❖ Key stakeholders have been **consulted and approved** of the UN-EMACCA establishment
- ❖ UN-EMACCA is a **temporary** stand-in for the DMAC and is independent from the de facto Government
- ❖ All funds for the UN-EMACCA will be channeled through and controlled and managed by UNMAS and no funds will be used to support the Taliban or the de facto Government
- ❖ The former civil servants will **remain at the DMAC** and continue to perform aspects of their duties
- ❖ Discussion on the **division of roles and responsibilities** between the UN-EMACCA and the de facto national authority is ongoing

Mr Heslop continued to outline some of the key challenges for the sector, including the high level of explosive contamination throughout the country (leftover from both old and new conflict), the high rate of movement of the population, suspended financial support to DMAC, the impact of ERW on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the difficulty of getting international staff and equipment into the country. The opportunities included the improvement in security in most areas, the ability of mine action teams to access previously contested areas and the general support of the Taliban to mine action. On the funding side, the UN has enough money to sustain the EMACCA until February 2022. However, the overall mine action sector needs \$US 50 million for the remainder of 2021 and US\$100 million for 2022. This money is needed to maintain the current demining workforce of around 5,000 deminers, maintain EORE and VA activities, undertake quick response projects and a national survey, and to maintain effective coordination.

Mr James Cowan, the CEO of HALO Trust, thanked the donors for their continued support, as organizations like HALO adjust to the new realities on the ground in Afghanistan. Mr Cowan recalled the tragic attack by ISIS that killed 12 HALO deminers and the uncertainties faced during the Taliban takeover. However, as of today, all 2,400 HALO Afghan employees are back at work in 12 provinces. HALO are undertaking tasks like survey, demining, IED clearance and weapons destruction. However, they have ceased any capacity building activities that would support the Taliban eg in the construction of ammunition bunkers. Mr Cowan noted that HALO were getting better freedom of movement and access in many areas, and that a reduction in corruption among local officials, e.g. in the context of road blocks, was significant. However, the Taliban response was not homogenous, for example, in some areas mixed EORE teams of men and women were allowed to work, but not in others. The current challenges include the collapse of the banking system and getting cash into the country to pay salaries, maintaining a neutral position, watching the security situation vis-à-vis ISIS and internal Taliban issues, and expanding HALO's capacity to deal with pressure plate IEDs. Mr Cowan concluded by saying that with donor support HALO can continue to operate and even expand its work.

Italy asked why mine action was not raised at the recent meeting in Qatar between donors and the Taliban, given that both groups see mine action as a priority. Mr Heslop said that it had been planned to attend the Qatar meeting, but mine action was deleted from the agenda by bigger issues like the collapse of the banking sector, security, terrorists, and drugs. Mr Heslop also said that the UN SRSG wants all UN sectors engaging with the relevant Taliban authorities and that she had spoken at a local meeting of the MASG just last week. At that meeting UNMAS said that they were getting daily requests from the Taliban for clearance tasks and for mine action to provide jobs. Mr Cowan agreed that HALOs experience is that the Taliban want explosive devices removed and jobs provided for unemployed Afghans. Italy also asked about the capacity of local staff to oversee mine action tasks. Mr Heslop said that for the last 10 years international staff had not been able to travel out of the main cities very often, so mine action had built effective local networks. However, some international staff were still needed for oversight and tracking of funds, and for certain technical matters. The lack of flights and the difficulty in international staff obtaining Pakistani visas to transit to Afghanistan were the main problems at present, but the UN were looking at various options.

The two power point presentations on Afghanistan are available on the MASG website.

2.2 Ethiopia. Mr Stephen Pritchard of UNMAS and Mr Hugues Laurence of UNICEF gave a joint presentation on the situation in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a significant history of landmine and ERW from conflicts since the 1930s and has recorded thousands of casualties over the years, but until recently there had been no new casualties since 2010. However, since fighting began in the Tigray region, the level of UXO/AXO/EO contamination has increased, with 93 suspected hazard areas being identified and two recent UNMAS assessment visits to the Tigray region identifying at least 26 new casualties occurring this year. There are no mine action operators working in Tigray at present. Access maps produced by OCHA show that most of Tigray region is accessible, however some areas, including those neighbouring the Afar and Amhara regions, are inaccessible. Mr Hugues Laurence from UNICEF said that it was hard to gauge the impact of explosive ordnance on children, but it is believed that there have been 70 incidents involving children and communities. Mass messaging including digital means of delivering EORE in Tigray is not possible, as there is no access to internet, text messages, radio, or TV and so UNICEF relies on paper materials and in-person approaches. UNICEF works closely with UNMAS, UNHCR and the recently established MA AoR. Mr Pritchard outlined that while the expulsion of seven UN staff from Ethiopia was in the news, there were still over 1,500 foreign aid workers in Ethiopia, with 150 UN staff in Tigray. HALO and NPA have been re-registered to work in the country, and Mr Pritchard is planning a mission to the area in November to try and support the ramp up of mine action. UNMAS have a two-pronged approach, the first is to scale up the mine action response in northern Ethiopia, and the second is to provide country-wide support to the Government with regards to its obligations to the APMBC. The power point presentation on Ethiopia is available on the MASG website.

2.3 Sahel. Mr Stephen Pritchard from UNMAS briefed on the situation in the Sahel region. From among the countries listed in the Global Protection Cluster Mine Action Area of Responsibility appeal for 2021, Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria required US\$15 million, of which less than a third has been raised. He noted that almost all members of the MASG fund some activity in the region. Ms Lorene Giorgis, from UNMAS Niger, explained that Niger is under pressure of violence from non-state armed groups on three main fronts (Diffa, Tillabéri/Tahoua and Maradi regions) and that the number of IED incidents has grown significantly since 2016. In the past five years, there have been 108 IED incidents with 323 victims, including 162 civilians killed or injured. However, data collection remains a challenge and these numbers are not representative of the magnitude of the threat in the country. Following a needs assessment and upon request from the RC, UNMAS opened an office in Niamey in late September 2021. The office currently supports the national mine action authority (CNCCAI) in updating its national norms and accreditation system and will deliver much-needed IED awareness sessions to humanitarians and vulnerable communities if additional funding is allocated. The situation in Niger is volatile and evolving, and issues like information management, coordination and resource mobilization need to be strengthened. Mr Pritchard then briefed about the situation in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, and CAR. Details of these updates and the power point presentation can be found on the MASG website.

2.4 Ukraine. Ms Manal Fouani, the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Ukraine, briefed the meeting on recent developments in the country. She said that the conflict in eastern Ukraine began in 2014 and since that time there have been 1,230 civilian casualties related to mine and ERW incidents. Large areas of Ukraine have been impacted by fighting and the ERW affected areas have not been surveyed. There is a large problem with IEDs, and it is believed that 150,000 people are

impacted along the line of contact. On the institutional arrangements, the law dealing with mine action ('On Mine Action in Ukraine') was amended by Parliament in 2020. This law gives a legal basis for international organizations to operate in the country. The national structure is still evolving, with the military chairing the inter-ministerial national authority, and two mine action centres sharing the same responsibilities regarding information management, quality control and monitoring, certification of operators, planning and other mine action operational tasks. UNDP chair a MA sub-cluster which was formed in 2015, and which serves as a unique information sharing and coordination platform, until the national authority and mine action centres become fully established. The UNDP mine action project covers EORE, information management, capacity building and coordination. Ongoing mine action field activities in Ukraine include risk education, land release, victim assistance, information management and gender activities. Ms Fouani then explained UNICEF's work on digitalization (with HALO) and how this was an approach to expand EORE, including to reach non-government-controlled areas. She mentioned the UNICEF door to door and VCR activities for children, as well as UNICEF work on VA, and the need to establish a VA working group. In concluding her presentation, Ms Fouani thanked all the donors who are supporting mine action in Ukraine.

The power point presentation on Ukraine is available on the MASG website.

3. BRIEFINGS: THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 Innovative Financing. Mr Michael Olasope from the Demining team of the UK FCDO, and Ms Camille Wallen of the HALO Trust, gave a presentation on a joint study they had undertaken on Innovative Financing for Mine Action. Mr Olasope said that the current shortfall in funding for mine action is around US\$1 billion - just to deal with legacy contamination from the 20th Century, and that the COVID pandemic has made the situation worse. To address this, the FCDO commissioned an NGO called Social Finance and The HALO Trust, to undertake a study on Innovative Financing. The aim of this research was to explore how innovative financing can address not only the obstacles to more effectively funded mine action, but also see explore how it can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all stages of mine action, from mine clearance through to restoration of economic and social activity. The research involved extensive consultation with a broad range of governments, NGO's and private stakeholders in donor & mine affected countries.

The three key models developed were:

- Outcome financing, eg impact bonds where payment made against independently verified outcomes of delivery. Can include private investors to finance and take the risk in return for a financial incentive.
- Outcomes based public-private partnership, which encourages private sector investment post-clearance in partnership with government, to deliver agreed outcomes e.g., socio-economic development.
- Front loading long-term pledges from donors which are converted into bonds to enable greater short-term delivery and achieve outcomes earlier.

The next step is to hold a workshop in Cambodia on 30 November 2021. where the potential pilot of one of these models in Cambodia will be explored. MASG members are welcome to join the meeting, which will be a hybrid meeting. Anyone that desires to attend either physically or virtually should register their interest with Michael Olasope by contacting him at Michael.olasope@fcdo.gov.uk.

The full report of the study can be found at www.halotrust.org/media/7786/innovative-finance-for-mine-action.pdf and a copy of the presentation can be found on the MASG website.

3.2 Reserved.

3.3 Beyond Square Metres. Ms Oksana Leshchenko from UNDP, and Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director GICHD, gave a presentation on the follow-up to a joint study undertaken by UNDP and the GICHD called 'Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the SDGs'. This study was undertaken to address the questions – what comes after demining and what are the development outcomes? The keys to success include;

- National ownership and commitment
- Knowledge and understand of the SDGs and the 2030 agenda
- Understanding the scope and impact of explosive ordnance
- Identifying the linkages – goals and objectives.

A new two-year project funded by Germany and titled 'Beyond Square Metres' is going to undertake an evidence -based analysis on the impact of mine action in six countries; Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine.

Ambassador Toscano then gave some examples of recent country-level studies undertaken by the GICHD. At the end of the war in Bosnia Herzegovina, 50% of the population had left and 37% of houses were damaged. Mine action played a role in enabling reconstruction, but this did not trigger a return of the population. This was due to a lack of shared inter-sectoral goals. There needs to be a stronger interaction between mine action and other development needs. In Colombia, mine action had contributed to peacebuilding, enabling the delivery of humanitarian aid, and reducing risk. Mine action also played a role in building trust between the Government and FARC, and the employment of ex-combatants helped with economic recovery. In conclusion, Ambassador Toscano reiterated that mine action goes beyond saving lives, as it promotes development and enables achievement of the SDGs. The GICHD will continue to document the successes of mine action and several other country studies will be published by the end of this year.

A copy of the power point presentation is available on the MASG website.

3.4 Public Health Approaches. Mr Hugues Laurence from UNICEF gave a presentation encouraging the adoption of a public health approach to mine action. Mr Laurence noted that public health is all about prevention and the wellbeing of populations, and whereas the medical model treats one person, a public health model treats a whole community. He gave the example of a gunshot wound – the medical model treats the victim, but the public health model deals with gun violence. Other public health interventions include armed violence reduction, tobacco control, road safety etc. He felt that mine action needed a paradigm shift from focusing on land, to a public health focus on the

impact of contamination on people. Mr Laurence noted that the preamble to the APMBC already uses public health language. He also gave the example of Cambodia, where clearance priorities were changed when victim data showed high numbers of casualties in what were originally considered areas to be a low priority for the allocation of clearance assets. In conclusion, Mr Laurence recommended that mine action use a public health approach and emphasized that this approach is not detrimental to the land release approach.

4. UPDATE FROM OBSERVERS

4.1 GICHD. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano, briefed on four current activities of the Centre. The first is a study on the effect of difficult terrain on land release, which is due to be finished in mid-2022. The next body of work deals with explosive ordnance risk education and the GICHD has developed a stand-alone EORE e-learning module and published a paper on 'Measuring the Results of EORE'. The third was an update on the development of a new online training course on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Finally, on 26-29 October 2021, the GICHD will organize an online workshop on the issues of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and Explosive Ordnance Risk Reduction (EORE) for the members of its Francophone Regional Cooperation Programme (FRCP). Full details of the GICHD Update can be found on the MASG website.

4.2 OAS. Mr Carl Case, the Senior Adviser Mine Action and SALW of the OAS in Washington DC, gave an update his work. The OAS continue to support mine affected countries in Central and South America. To date, eight of the 11 ERW affected countries have achieved mine-free status. The remaining three, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, all have requested OAS assistance to meet their APMBC deadlines. Currently Ecuador has a deadline of 2022, Peru has 2024 and Colombia (the most affected country) has a deadline of 2025.

4.3 ITF Enhancing Human Security The Director of the ITF, Ambassador Tomaz Lovrencic, noted that the ITF had been working with mine action donors for many years to ensure that funds were spent effectively. Currently, the ITF maintains a small office in Kabul with three local staff. The future of the office is uncertain, and it will not re-open until the security situation is clear and the donor agrees. Austria and Slovenia have funded work in NE Syria under the 'Clear and Grow' programme. In September, the ITF took part in a ceremony to declare Sarajevo as mine-free. It was encouraging to declare a success and to see the positive impact of mine action on reconstruction, tourism, and safe schools. Ambassador Lovrencic thanked Germany for leading the country coalition approach in Bosnia Herzegovina.

4.4 JMU. The Interim Director of the Center for Stabilization and International Recovery (CISR) at James Madison University, Ms Suzanne Fiederlein, spoke about 25 years of the Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction. The anniversary edition, Issue 25.1 is a special double issue and contains 27 articles. In the process of preparing the anniversary edition, CISR staff reviewed all 64 previous issues of the Journal, and they capture the stories, challenges, and successes of the mine action sector of the past 25 years. The on-line version of the anniversary edition is available, and the hard copy will be mailed out shortly. Details of the Journal are on the MASG website.

4.5 Drumlanrig Group. Mr Darren Cormack, the Chair of the Drumlanrig Group (and the CEO of MAG), spoke about the Groups concern with the EO situation in Myanmar. He said that Myanmar currently has the highest civilian casualty rates from EO accidents, and it is getting worse. The situation is exacerbated by the large number of displaced people and the dynamic nature of the conflict. Data collection is essential to establish a baseline and to guide EORE activities. Despite the challenging operational situation, essential and lifesaving work is still possible, particularly through community-based organizations. Mr Cormack urged donors to consider Myanmar, along with their other priorities. A copy of the power point presentation is posted on the MASG website.

4.6 ISU APMBC. Mr Juan Carlos Ruan, the Director of the ISU APMBC reminded the meeting that the 19th Meeting of States Parties will be held in The Hague from 15 to 19 November 2021. The meeting will be a hybrid format, with some delegates attending in person and others joining on-line. The meeting will consider several extension requests, and there is concern that Eritrea seems disengaged from the process at present. Countries like Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Nigeria need more support, and there is growing concern over the use of improvised anti-personnel mines. The MSP will also feature an interesting range of side events. The link to the MSP is at;<https://new.apminebanconvention.org/en/meetings/meetings-of-the-states-parties/nineteenth-meeting-of-the-states-parties-19msp/>

5. AOB and MEETING CLOSE

5.1 Introduction of next Chair of MASG. The Chair introduced Ambassador Yves Marek of France, the Secretary General of the National Commission for the Elimination of Anti-Personnel Mines (CNEMA), who will be the next Chair of the MASG. Ambassador Marek said that it was a great honour for France, and himself personally, to take over the Chair. He thanked Germany for their successful work over the past two years and said he hoped to continue in the same way. Ambassador Marek noted that France will assume the Presidency of the EU for the first six months of 2022 and that they planned to make mine action a priority. Finally, Ambassador Marek said that he had some ideas for the MASG going forward but encouraged members to share any suggestions that they may have with him. He concluded by saying that he was looking forward to working with the MASG members and the observers next year.

5.2 Closing Remarks. The Chair said that setting the date of the next meeting of the MASG was up to France, but he thought that it was good practice to hold the MASG meeting in the margins of the NDM-UN, which is planned for May 2022 in Geneva. Mr Bindseil thanked the USA for providing the ongoing funding for the MASG secretariat, and he appreciated the work of the secretary. He also thanked Ms Katharina Dolezalek and his team at the German FFO for their work in supporting the MASG.

The Chair closed the meeting at 17.00 (CEST).

ANNEX A: Donor Updates, MASG Meeting 19 October 2021

1.1 Netherlands. The representative of The Netherlands said that their current mine action funding programme was running smoothly. For the past 1 ½ years they have been working with the UK and a consultancy to develop a mine action methodology for the Theory of Change (TOC) and Theory of Action (TOA). This work is now complete, and the UK is already implementing it in its programmes and The Netherlands will start soon. The Netherlands will hand-over the results of its work on TOC/TOA and make it available to others. A series of events will be held to explain the work to donors, national authorities, and other stakeholders. The Netherlands is the President of the upcoming 19th Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC. Preparations are well underway, and the meeting will be held partly in-person and partly on-line.

1.2 European Union. The representative of the European Union thanked Germany for the preparation of the donor maps and offered some changes to the EU situation. The European Union funds mine action work in 20 countries through its various programmes.

1.3 Ireland. Ireland currently has a 4-year multi-annual funding programme with HALO Trust for US\$2 million per year that covers five countries – Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The programme is due to finish at the end of 2021 and discussion are underway for a new programme. It is hoped that similar levels of funding will be maintained. The Irish Embassy in Hanoi oversees another programme that provides a total of \$1.3 million per year to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. This programme is also due to finish at the end of 2021 and an evaluation is currently being undertaken.

1.4 Italy. Over the past few years, mine action funding from Italy has been around EUR 4 million per year. However, this year it was raised to EUR 8.5 million, which allowed expansion of support to countries like Mali and Niger, with some bilateral support to Libya and Iraq. Italy funds 13 countries through UNMAS and the ICRC. Italy recently signed an MoU between its military Counter IED centre and the GICHD.

1.5 Norway. The representative of Norway introduced herself, being new to the MASG and the mine action portfolio. Despite the recent turnover of staff, Norway puts a high priority on mine action and hopes to increase this. Norway is committed to humanitarian aid and is concerned about the current situation in Afghanistan.

1.6 Sweden. Sweden currently has a multi-year programme that funds MAG and DRC in about 15 countries until the end of 2021. The plan is to extend the programme for another 18 months with another EUR 10 million. Sweden has a flexible country approach, depending on current priorities, and has recently funded MAG in Senegal. Sweden also funds UNMAS in Iraq and provide core funding to the GICHD.

1.7 Belgium. The representative of Belgium also introduced herself as new to the MASG. Belgium has some updates for the donor maps. Belgium welcomed the recently approved IMAS on Victim Assistance and believes that the introduction of this new standard will help landmine victims and survivors.

1.8 USA. The representative of the USA introduced herself as the new Director of PM/WRA, succeeding Mr Stan Brown (a former Chair of the MASG). At the MASG meeting in May, the US noted that the President's request of US\$255 million for 2022 was the largest ever budget request for mine action. The request is currently being considered by Congress, and it includes US\$10 million to restart a US demining program in Syria. PM/WRA is hoping for final Congressional action on the 2022 budget by the end of this year. Since May, new projects have started in the West Bank, Sudan, and plans are being finalized for Nagorno Karabakh.

1.9 Germany. The current German Mine Action Strategy runs from 2019 to 2021. This strategy is currently being evaluated and then a new strategy will be developed before the end of the year. Germany allocated EUR 50 million in 2021 for mine action, which included an increased amount for Afghanistan. The funding level for 2022 is expected to be EUR 40 million.

Australia. The representative of Australia was also new to the MASG and introduced herself. Australia is pleased to announce that funding for mine action has nearly returned to pre-COVID levels. The focus for Australia is the Indo-Pacific region, where the Australian Defence Force regularly helps with ERW removal and EORE programmes. Australia recently signed a AUD\$ 15 million partnership agreement with the Solomon Islands to assist with infrastructure, equipment and training, as well as providing an EOD adviser. Australia is continuing to provide funding to Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Myanmar, Syria, and Sri Lanka. In Cambodia, Australia just provided the fourth (and last) tranche of AUD\$7.6 million to the Clearing for Results programme to cover the period to 2024.

As at 4 Nov 21