

**Statement by the Drumlanrig Group  
Mine Action Support Group (MASG) Meeting  
04 December 2025**

Thank you, Ambassador, for the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Drumlanrig Group, which consists of DCA, DRC, GICHD, HALO Trust, HI, MAG, and NPA.

In the UN Secretary General's annual report on the status of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the Secretary General reported more than 120 armed conflicts worldwide, many with blatant violations and permissive interpretations of international humanitarian law.

In 2024, more than 360 humanitarian aid workers were killed in 20 countries, the deadliest year on record for humanitarian personnel. This year, we witnessed the horrendous attacks on a DRC demining operation in Ukraine, which claimed the lives of two Ukrainian colleagues and left eight others injured, and on an UNOPS facility in Gaza, claiming one UN worker's life and injuring an expert seconded by MAG. The attack is a stark reminder of the dangers of mine action and the obligation under IHL to respect humanitarian relief personnel. We urge MASG members to strengthen the protections of humanitarian workers, including humanitarian demining teams, and regard the issue of outmost importance.

This year, we have witnessed the withdrawals of five states parties from the APMBC, namely Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and Ukraine's illegal suspension of its obligations. We encourage these states to continue to engage with the convention's processes and uphold its norms. We believe that remaining within the convention is the only way to mitigate harm and damage to the convention. IHL and weapon bans such as the APMBC were designed precisely for exceptional circumstances and times of war. We welcome Tonga and the Marshall Islands to the APMBC and look forward to other states joining. In the context of decreased respect for IHL and increased number of armed conflicts, it is paramount that states develop policies and fund operational measures such as mine action to strengthen the protection of civilians. Land release, victim assistance, risk education and Conflict Prevention and Protection (CPP) are urgently needed for civilians and their communities. Humanitarian Mine Action is a reaffirmation of core humanitarian principles, a contribution to human security, and an investment in stability, recovery, and development.

The UN Secretary General said earlier this year that states must "accelerate mine action as an enabler of human rights and sustainable development and drive forward the vision of a mine-free world".

However, the "acceleration" that the Secretary General called for is facing up to the realities of unprecedented funding challenges. The *Clearing the Mines* Report of 2025 by Mine Action Review revealed that global land release output for 2024 compared to 2023 dropped by 26 %, largely due to reduction in funding to the sector. The impact of the larger cuts which were made this year will be prevalent in next year's report. We are also concerned about the funding

decline's effect on data collection, impacting data on casualties and incidents, which is key to facilitate work such as CPP.

Long-term commitments from donors are of the greatest value and cannot be overestimated. Funding for humanitarian mine action should be regarded as a critical and affordable measure to ensure humanitarian access and to enable socio-economic development and safe communities, ultimately rebuilding societies scorched by conflict. We should also keep in mind that the capacity to mobilize the numbers of experienced staff necessary for new operations in contexts like Gaza depends on the operators having the strength in depth in other countries.

At present, most funding goes to a relatively small number of affected states, leaving many states with light, medium, or legacy contamination with insufficient to no resources to address their contamination problem, despite all their efforts to meet obligations. For example, Algeria, Bosnia & Hercegovina, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Palestine, Peru, Senegal, Tajikistan, and Thailand each conducted less than 500 000 square meters of mine clearance in 2024, and Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Serbia, and Sudan did not report any mine clearance at all last year. It is our clear belief that getting the job done in many of these countries, as well as in countries like Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, is fully achievable, if funding is allocated and access allowed. In contexts where clearance is not possible, humanitarian mine action is still needed to mitigate risk, by implementing interventions such as explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, and so forth.

We see it as an obligation for the donors to ensure continued support to countries where there is proactive engagement from national authorities in respect to their commitments under the APMBC. In other countries, including Afghanistan and Sudan, there are huge needs and if left without mine action support, there is increased chance of intensified violence.

Exploring new and innovative mechanisms that can facilitate additional funding sources is crucial. We therefore encourage the establishment of a voluntary trust fund for the implementation of clearance obligations, and that it receives the necessary focus and attention by the MASG members to ensure it will be established and operationalized as soon as possible. Such a mechanism would also be in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, underscoring the importance of not leaving anyone behind.

In conclusion, we look forward to the continued and strengthened collaboration with MASG members and with other partners in the sector, in a time when enhanced action and cooperation are urgently needed, moving us towards the full protection of civilians.

Thank you.