

MINUTES

MASG MEETING OPEN SESSION

Thursday, 4 December 2025

Room XV - UN Palais des Nations - Geneva

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting at 13.15 hours and welcomed the 41 MASG members and observers to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to the Acting Director of UNMAS, Ms Rita Lubis, who was attending her first MASG meeting. The Chair reiterated his desire to make the MASG a more dynamic and interactive forum and then outlined the agenda for the meeting.

In the interests of transparency, the Chair gave a brief resume of the Closed session of the MASG held the day before. In terms of funding, most donors were in a 'steady state' situation, with a few donors increasing their mine action funding, and a few decreasing. Many donors were prioritizing their funding to a lesser number of recipients, but were conscious to avoid where possible, a situation where all donors leave a country at the same time. Ukraine was not discussed as it was felt this was covered in other fora – instead Gaza, Syria and UN/humanitarian reset were the focus of discussion. The meeting also heard an update on innovative finance.

2. BRIEFINGS – GLOBAL AND REGIONAL MINE ACTION

2.1 Future direction of Mine Action within the UN (Panel Discussion)

The Chair introduced the agenda item by saying that the aim of the session was to increase the understanding of issues that the UN mine action family is currently grappling with, and to provide opportunity for the MASG to feed into the process. He said that the UN was at an inflexion point, with both UN80 reforms and Humanitarian Reset processes underway. It was important for the MASG to reflect on what these processes will mean for UN humanitarian mine action. The Chair introduced the panellists – Ms Rita Lubis (Acting Director UNMAS), Mr Steinar Essen (UNDP), Mr Hugues Laurence (UNIC EF), Ms Sonia Pezier (UNOPS) and Mr James Staples (IACG-MA).

Ms Lubis started by reminding that mine action is an enabler across many sectors. She felt that UNMAS needed to better elaborate how mine action could help other UN agencies achieve their mandates. Mr Essen welcomed the UN80 process and said that it was a good opportunity for the UN mine action family to do better. He noted that the different UN offices and agencies had their own strengths and that these should be maximized, and that UNDP was involved with mine action projects in many countries – both at the early recovery phase and longer-term development. The different UN agencies needed to explain better how they worked together as "one UN". He noted they were holding a meeting next week to take this forward. Ms Pezier explained the role of UNOPS was to provide project management services to the UN agencies and governments. UNOPS became involved with mine action projects when UNMAS was formed in 1997 and that the services they provide are still required to ensure the UN had an implementation capacity. UNOPS had recently undertaken a review of its internal processes and was committed to reform. Mr Laurence said that

UNICEF NY was undergoing significant cuts and organizational changes. However, mine action, under the child protection framework, would remain a key part of the UNICEF strategic plan. Mr Laurence felt that the current IACG-MA mechanism was working well, with monthly meetings of agencies at the working level, and twice-yearly meetings at the principals level. He noted the need to break down silos and bridge gaps between UN mandates, for example recognising the overlap between the children in conflict agenda and mine action. Finally, Mr Staples said that the upcoming inter-agency meeting to review the UN Policy on Mine Action was a great opportunity. He believed the IACG-MA needed to be able to support the plans of RC/HCs in the field, and to act as a partner for the major mine action NGOs. He noted that mine action cuts across different parts of donor government funding structures.

In general discussion several points were raised. Ms Lubis reminded that in situations where there are no existing national authorities, UNMAS was a provider 'of last resort' and that they could implement projects like survey, clearance, EORE etc until a handover to national body could be arranged. Ms Pezier said that information management was key and establishing a centralized national data base was often a challenge. The GICHD noted that there were new opportunities for 'big data' where it was possible to link together existing data bases, including IMSMA. Several speakers noted that coordination (by the UN?) at the country level was essential. This is usually the role of the UN, but in some cases, donors have assumed the role of coordination. Lebanon was highlighted as a good example of national coordination, facilitated by a leading donor. The suggestion was made that the MASG could look at arranging local Embassy-convened MASG meetings at the country level. In conclusion, the Chair thanked all participants for their inputs during this vital period for UN mine action and promised to return to it at the next MASG meeting in April.

For reference, the current UN Policies and Guidelines on Mine Action can be found at <https://www.unmas.org/en/united-nations-mine-action-policies-and-guidelines>

Gaza. Mr Julius van der Walt, the UNMAS Programme Manager for the oPt, gave a presentation on the current situation in the oPt. He started by noting that the UN had been present in the oPt throughout the conflict and strived to maintain neutrality. The future of the UN there depended on donor funding and advocacy. He said that the explosive threat in Gaza was high, with both conventional and improvised explosive devices being encountered. Over 400 EO victims have been reported since October 2023, although this figure is likely to be much under-reported. Current focus in Gaza is on addressing immediate risks through hazard assessment and risk education. The aspiration – dependent upon permissions and no return to conflict – is to deliver humanitarian mine action to normal standards. The EO contamination in the West Bank has increased ten-fold over the past year. In terms of coordination, in 2024, UNMAS was designated as acting mine action coordinator in Gaza. UNMAS and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) co-chair the Mine Action Area of Responsibility, engaging over 30 partners. This covers standardization, QA, IM and advocacy. The UN and partners are unable to conduct clearance work at present, and challenges include security, logistics, access, etc. UNOPs spoke of the need to scale up capacity, including EOD capacity, noting that tasking is increasing since the ceasefire. UNICEF said that EORE and Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP) activities have been conducted, along with some VA work. UNDP spoke about the importance of early recovery efforts, and listed rubble removal / debris management as critical activities, particularly for schools and hospitals early recovery. UNDP observed that mine action

element of rubble removal cannot be a bottleneck and must be costed into reconstruction. Finally, the UN outlined their capacity development work with the Palestine Mine Action Centre (PMAC) and gave the statistics of their response since October 2023. A copy of the UNMAS presentation can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>.

In discussion, the HALO Trust further emphasised that mine action cannot be a bottleneck, noting that dedicated mine action funding would not be sufficient, a mine action element would need to be built into wider budgets, including for agricultural, humanitarian and healthcare projects.

3. BRIEFINGS – THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 Report from Innovation Conference – GICHD. Mr Rory Logan, the Chief of Operations at the GICHD, gave an update on the recent GICHD Innovation Conference, which was held in Luxembourg from 28-30 October 2025. The aim of the conference was to explore how to assist the mine action sector get more out of available resources, by tapping in to existing and emerging technologies, and improving processes and frameworks. GICHD had formed an Innovation Hub, which had a steering board and innovative technical groups to look at various research work, innovation activities and partnerships. The Innovation Conference is held every two years, and goes beyond technology, as it looks at processes and resources as well. One feature of the conference was the awarding of the Innovation Awards for 2025. Some of the take-aways from the conference were that technology alone does not solve the problem – operational integration does, and that funding models must adapt to support risk taking, scaling and human capital. Also, the sector should tap into innovative funding sources. A copy of the GICHD presentation can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

4. UPDATES FROM OBSERVERS

4.1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). An update from the GICHD can be found at the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

4.2 International Trust Fund (ITF). The representative of the ITF reminded members that the core work of the ITF is undertaken in SE Europe, where they have established a regional forum. However, they have implemented projects in Asia and other parts of the world. The ITF has a board of donors consisting of 32 donor members, and they meet twice per year. The ITF tries to focus on the broader humanitarian area, particularly on victim assistance. The ITF is undertaking efforts to increase its donor support and recently has undertaken work funded by the Qatar Fund for Development in a hospital in Bethlehem. The full update from the ITF can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

4.3 Organization of American States (OAS). Mr Steven Griner said that the OAS was undergoing a reorganization, and mine action would be combined with conventional weapons destruction programmes. He said that both Ecuador and Peru were close to completing their APMBC Article 5 obligations – most likely before their 2029 deadlines. Colombia will not finish clearance before 2030, but hopefully soon after. The OAS currently undertakes QA in Colombia but want to pass this responsibility onto the Government. However, upcoming elections and other factors may affect this. Mr Griner reiterated that donors are committed to having South America become the first mine free

region in the world. The full update from the OAS can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

4.4 Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR JMU). The update from CISR can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

4.5 Implementation Support Unit APMBC. Not present

4.6 Drumlanrig Group of NGOs. Mr Aksel Steen Nielsen, representing the Group, said that they welcomed the change of dynamics of the MASG, and also the positive signals from the UN about better coordination. He expressed concern about the situation in DRC, Ukraine and Gaza, and asked that MASG members continue to consider the safety of local mine action workers. He also asked MASG members to make public statements against countries leaving or ‘suspending’ their membership of the APMBC. He supported the UN GA statements that mine action was an enabler to other sectors, and that the mine action sector must have the capacity to respond quickly to crises like Gaza. Mr Nielsen urged donors not to forget ‘legacy’ affected countries, supported the work on innovative financing, and also supported the establishment of a VTF for the APMBC. The full update from the Drumlanrig Group can be found on the MASG website at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/resources/documents/masg>

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair confirmed that the UK would continue as Chair of the MASG for a second year through 2026.

The Chair thanked the USA for their ongoing funding of the MASG secretariat post.

The Chair outlined the planned dates and locations for MASG meetings in 2026. They are.

- 1st in-person MASG meeting of 2026 will take place in Geneva during the NDM UN from 22 to 24 April 2026
- July – possibly another video conference for MASG members only, to retain momentum
- 2nd in person MASG Meeting will take place in Geneva in margins of 23 MSP APMBC from 30 Nov to 4 Dec 2026.

6. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair said he would take as an action point the request to investigate the feasibility of establishing local Embassy-led MASG meetings to assist national coherence in mine affected countries. He also asked for suggestions or ideas for future discussion to help make the MASG more inter-active and dynamic.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting at 14.50 hours.

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