

MINUTES

MASG MEETING OPEN SESSION

ZOOM, 15 OCTOBER 2020.

1. Opening Remarks

1.1 Meeting Open. The Chair of the MASG, Mr Wolfgang Bindseil, opened the Zoom meeting at 14.00 hours (CET) and welcomed the 70 participants. The Chair then introduced Under Secretary-General Pierre Lacroix from DPO and invited him to address the meeting.

1.2 USG Lacroix, DPO. Mr Lacroix started by thanking the MASG for their relentless support to mine action, and said that today he would focus on three key areas: the first area is the resilience that the mine action sector has displayed during the pandemic; the second area is the progress that we have made together and the challenges that are lying ahead; and the third area points to the importance of strong partnerships for this joint endeavour that lies ahead.

Firstly, Mr Lacroix said that the mine action sector had managed to adapt to the new reality of COVID 19. He noted that while facing this pandemic, mine action programmes have adapted, innovation has been embraced and lives have continued to be saved. Mr Lacroix gave some examples where COVID 19 messages had been integrated in to EORE messages, national capacities continued to be strengthened through virtual means, and peacekeeping operations had continued.

Secondly, Mr Lacroix spoke about the progress that has been made, while noting that that the threat of explosive ordnance is not abating, and the increasing urbanization of conflict is creating new explosive threats in urban areas. In peacekeeping operations, this June saw the unprecedented use of anti-tank mines in CAR against peacekeepers, which is of great concern. It is clear that training and equipping troop- and police- contributing countries to peacekeeping remains crucial. Mr Lacroix then outlined support UNMAS had provided in Sudan and Somalia.

Thirdly, Mr Lacroix spoke about the importance of partnerships. He noted the recent coordination work of the IACG-MA and thanked UNMAS for their successful field and headquarters work over the last few months. The IACG-MA had issued a joint statement to donors and produced a dashboard, displaying a mapping of the status of UN mine action programmes around the world in May. Since then, UNMAS has been reaching out to donors, NGOs, and national partners to increase information-sharing and collaboration.

In closing, Mr Lacroix appealed to the MASG to continue to provide political and financial support to the sector, so that we can maintain momentum towards the goal of a world that is free from the threat of mines, explosive remnants or war, and improvised explosive devices. Mr Lacroix thanked the MASG for their partnership, commitment, and support – which is crucial to collective efforts in mine action.

1.3 Update from the Chair. The Chair thanked Mr Lacroix for his intervention and his ongoing commitment to mine action. The Chair updated the meeting on a few points. He presented the donor maps the German FFO had recently produced, referring to them as a visual representation of mine action funding from the donor perspective and from the partner country view. The maps will be kept up-to-date and posted on the MASG website.

Referring to recent meetings, Mr Bindseil briefed about the UN Global Protection Cluster mine action AoR meeting involving nearly 400 participants, where he had represented donors. He said that he welcomed the inclusion of mine action into the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), as this allows donors to concentrate on strategic issues, like whom and where to fund. Inclusion of mine action into HRPs would also allow mine action operators access to other sources of funds, such as the Country-Based Pooled Funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Finally, Mr Bindseil referred to German mine action assistance to Bosnia Herzegovina through the 'country coalition' concept, which has been introduced in the context of the CCM. The concept aims to support affected countries regarding challenges they face due to landmines, cluster munition and other explosive remnants of war. Germany met with Bosnia and 40 stakeholders on 13 October which was the first time in several years that they were all together. The main aim of the coalition was to support national ownership. Legislation, action plans and indicators were discussed. Mr Bindseil noted that a planned contribution of EUR 10 million to Bosnia from the EU was re-allocated upon a national request to the fight against COVID 19, indicating increased competition for funding against the backdrop of the pandemic.

2. Country Specific Updates

2.1 Libya. Mr Lance Malin, the UN Programme Manager in Libya, read out a statement from Brigadier Mohamed Torjman, the Director of the Libyan Mine Action Centre (who was unable to join the meeting for technical reasons) and then gave a power point presentation. There is a large amount of ERW contamination in Libya, particularly in building rubble in cities like Tripoli, Sirte and Misrata. There are currently nine partners working in Libya and the LibMAC coordinates their work and doubles as the national mine action authority. Several international NGO staff had to leave due to COVID 19, but the Government is assisting with their return and it has increased the use of local networks. The key challenges include the need for multi-language programmes, the high number of refugees moving through Libya, the need for increased local capacity and strengthening the coordination role of LibMAC. The power point presentation and four fact sheets on Libya are available on the MASG website.

2.2 Nigeria. The UNMAS Programme Coordinator in Nigeria, Mr Lionel Pechera, gave an update on the situation in Nigeria on behalf of the whole mine action AoR. Nigeria has faced the threat of ERW, and more recently IEDs, for over 11 years. Programmes for EORE, non-technical survey and victim assistance have been undertaken. Nigeria has some local capacity, but it is limited. Challenges include an insecure environment, limited access to affected areas, and the impact of COVID 19. Nigeria is a member of the APMBBC but will submit an extension request in October 2020. Nigeria has established an inter-ministerial committee and is in the process of creating a national authority. The way forward includes strengthening national ownership, assisting the development of a

normative and operational framework, supporting local capacity, and promoting a regional approach within the country (as the situation differs throughout). Sustained funding is still a challenge and Nigeria currently needs US\$7.8 million. The power point presentation and a fact sheet on Nigeria are available on the MASG website.

2.3 Afghanistan. While introducing this topic, the Chair noted the recent United Nations 1st Committee resolution on “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”. Mr Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, the Officer-in-Charge of the UNMAS programme in Afghanistan, spoke about the current situation in Afghanistan. Regrettably, civilian casualties have risen from an historic low of 36 per month in 2012, to over 130 per month in 2019. In 2018, nearly half of all EO child casualties in the world were from Afghanistan. It was also noted that 98 per cent of EO-related casualties are due to either ERW (44 %) or victim operated improvised explosive devices (VOIED) (54%), placed during recent fighting. Only 1% of casualties are the result of legacy landmines from the Soviet era. Mr Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, the Director of the Directorate of Mine Action, then updated the meeting on the organizational response. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) fully transitioned from UN control in 2018 to the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC). The MAPA has 10 implementing partners who employ over 6,000 Afghans. The DMAC coordinates their work and the UN provides technical and financial assistance. Some activities had to be suspended due to COVID 19, but all have re-started and are following guidelines issued by DMAC. Key challenges include the clearance of VOIEDs, implementing behaviour-change strategies for more effective risk education, identifying the scale of the IED problem, engaging with other sectors, and promoting mine action as a peacebuilding tool. Mr Yosufi encouraged MASG members to help DMAC build on progress and achievements with sustained funding, particularly for IED clearance and to support advocacy efforts to include humanitarian mine action as a component of peace initiatives. The power point presentation and a fact sheet on Afghanistan are available on the MASG website.

3. Thematic Updates

3.1 UN Role in National Capacity Building. Ms Ilene Cohn, Deputy Director and Officer-in-Charge for UNMAS, introduced the topic of strengthening national capacity in mine action. She noted that 22 indicators are used to measure progress towards the relevant strategic outcome in the UN Mine Action Strategy 2019 – 2023, which says ‘National institutions effectively lead and manage mine action functions and responsibilities’. She also noted that trends only tend to be observed over a period of years in the 29 programmes supported by the UN. Most UNMAS programmes have national capacity development as a strategic objective in their country programme strategies, including in peacekeeping settings. UNMAS measures progress in terms of the ability of the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) to prioritize and task in accordance with development and humanitarian goals, and the capacity of the security sector to respond to EO threats. Ms Cohn noted UN agencies measure similar things differently and noted that the GICHD and NPA also have well-developed approaches and metrics in this area. Experience indicates that successful national capacity development is largely a function of national political will, national budget allocations and the existence of national coordination mechanisms. Finally, Ms Cohn urged member states to use their various advocacy platforms as donors and bilateral actors to encourage affected states to

commit to capacity development, to partner with complementary sectors and regional organizations and to integrate mine action requirements into national sustainable development plans. A copy of Ms Cohn's abridged remarks is available on the MASG website.

Mr Hugues Laurence, who is leading the mine action workstream in UNICEF headquarters also emphasized the criticality of capacity development for line ministries and other national stakeholders in places without national mine action authorities. He highlighted the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of these approaches and gave the example of Syria, where Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) was successfully integrated into the national school curriculum and immunization campaigns through extensive engagement with the Ministries of Education and Health.

Mr Luca Renda, the Team Leader for Recovery Solutions and Human Mobility in UNDP, then spoke about the work of UNDP in capacity building. He noted that UNDP had been involved with mine action since 1993 and had assisted over 40 countries. Capacity building is at the core of UNDP's work world-wide, and he gave the example of Lebanon, where UNDP staff is co-located with LMAC. The project is in its fourth phase of its support. UNDP conducts regular needs assessment, such as recently in Vietnam and Yemen. He stressed that UNDP are not an operator, but rather play a neutral, advisory role when providing assistance. UNDP implements exit strategies when the local capacity has been developed, such as in Tajikistan where UNDP closed its programme after 10 years. UNDP stress the importance of including mine action in development planning, as evidenced by the declaration of an SDG 18 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Lao PDR. UNDP is currently in the process of drafting a new 'Handbook on Capacity Development in Mine Action'. This Handbook will be useful for all mine action practitioners, including the UN family, national counterparts and operators on the ground.

3.2 Gender and Diversity: Using Information management to Drive Change. Mr Amir Omeragic, the Head of the Peace and Security Cluster of UNOPS explained the role and capacity of UNOPS - as a service provider to the UN. UNOPS currently manages 19 UNMAS field programmes and employs 671 project personnel. UNOPS 'Gender and Diversity Strategy' with five objectives aims at increasing the proportion of qualified women recruited by UNOPS, enhancing representation by women and under-represented groups in leadership roles, strengthening the role of women in technical areas, ensuring accountability by management and gender mainstreaming in-line with the UN Mine Action Strategy. Ms Talitha Dowd then demonstrated the Global Portal that UNOPS had developed to record information and track progress of the key objectives. The Portal houses the strategy, workplans and a dashboard. The dashboard increases the visibility of progress, informs data-driven decision making, and ensures leadership accountability to achieve results and impact. UNOPS works with several partners on this activity, including the GICHD and NPA. The Portal allows managers to track over time the achievement of KPIs such as hiring trends, future projections etc. The power point presentation and a fact sheet are available on the MASG website.

3.3 IMAS Compliance Tool. Mr Guy Rhodes (GCSP) and Mr David Hewitson (Fenix Insight Ltd) gave a joint presentation on a new Compliance Tool that Fenix has developed for the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The IMAS detail the responsibilities of actors at different levels: national mine action authorities (NMAAs); mine action centres (MACs) and mine action operators (MAOs), as well as some individual roles. The normative elements of the standards use the word 'shall' to

indicate “requirements, methods or specifications which are to be applied in order to conform to the standard”, ‘should’ to indicate “the preferred requirements, methods or specifications” and ‘may’ to indicate “a possible method or course of action”. Mr Rhodes pointed out that the existing 45 separate IMAS come to around 1,000 pages in printed form.

The new online App at mineaction.net is the result of databasing the compliance aspects of the IMAS within a rigorous quality management protocol. It is designed to make it easier to address the challenges of compliance. It allows users to easily query, search and filter the entire body of the compliance text from a thematic, activity-based, or standard-specific perspective and to generate focused compliance checklists. Importantly, it ensures that different users have the same understanding of what ‘IMAS compliance’ means. The tool allows filtering by topic, level of responsibility or by compliance level (shall, should, may). It can also quickly identify amendments to existing IMAS and cross check between IMAS and national standards. At present there are 300 registered users for the App, which is provided free of charge. Fenix are currently looking at the application of the tool to other standards, like DDR standards, IATGs and MOSAIC. The power point presentation and a fact sheet are available on the MASG website.

Mr Shafiq Yosufi from DMAC, Afghanistan, stressed the usefulness of the tool and explained that DMAC planned to apply it to their national standards. As a particularly helpful application he mentioned the accreditation of operators and the linking to other documents, like GICHD guidelines. Mr Case from the OAS supported this assessment in the context of Colombia and announced they will soon work on a Spanish version. The OAS was also interested if the tool could be applied to other standards, like the SALW UN Action Plan and IATGs. In closing this agenda item, the Chair thanked the presenters for developing a ‘common good’ that supports the whole mine action sector.

3.4 Review of New Technologies and Methodologies for EORE in Challenging Contexts. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano gave a presentation on new technologies on methodologies for EORE in challenging contexts. He noted that risk education is a right and referred to a chart that showed that mine and ERW casualties among civilians had been rising since 2013. He stressed that risk education must evolve to meet current trends and said that an EORE Advisory Group consisting of 12 organizations had been established in May 2019. The progress of the group and a GICHD publication can be found at the website www.eore.org. The theme of the work was ‘Going Digital and Digging Deeper’. The Going Digital component involves trust, a two-way exchange and complementarity with other RE aspects. The Dig Deeper component relates to making sure RE is evidence based and leads to behaviour change. Ambassador Toscano noted that the Oslo Action Plan and the draft Lausanne Action Plan included targets for risk education. A copy of the power point presentation is available on the MASG website.

4. General Update and AOB.

4.1 Next NDM-UN meeting. Ms Ilene Cohn explained that the annual meeting of National Mine Action Directors and UN Adviser (NDM-UN) has traditionally been held in Geneva each February. However, due to renovations to the UN Palais it had previously been decided to hold the 2021 meeting (NDM-UN) in Bonn. However, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the current way forward is to postpone the meeting to mid-May 2021 – but still hold it in Bonn. This way it is hoped that the

meeting could be held in person, or at least in a hybrid fashion. This has implications for the MASG, as its meeting is usually held in the margins of the NDM-UN. Ms Cohn said that they would continue to consult with partners about the date and location for the NDM-UN.

4.2 Article in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction. The Chair advised that the MASG had submitted an article for the next edition of the JMU Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction. The theme of the next edition is focussed on the effects of COVID 19 on the mine action sector, and the MASG article is based on the MASG Zoom call held in May which addressed the impact of COVID 19 on donors.

4.3 Launch of UNICEF Core Commitments. Mr Hugues Laurence spoke about the launch today of the revised UNICEF policy and framework for humanitarian action, the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs). The CCCs has a Policy, Advocacy and Communication Tool, a Reporting Framework, and a Partnership Tool. An International Legal Framework sets out the legal basis for the CCCs, and a scope of Application sets out when and where the CCCs apply. Finally, Child Protection CCC 7 outlines the commitment against landmines and other indiscriminate weapons and the benchmarks to measure progress. UNICEF encouraged all donors to use IHL and International Human Rights Law (including the Convention on the Rights of the Child) as the basis to protect people. A copy of the UNICEF power point presentation and a link to the overall CCC package are available on the MASG website.

4.4 Management Review of IMAS. Ms Ilene Cohn reminded the meeting that UNMAS had commissioned an independent review of the management structure of IMAS back in 2019. The evaluation was undertaken by the company Ernst and Young and they had delivered their report in December 2019. Since then there have been two meetings of the senior management body – the IMAS Steering Group – to consider the recommendations made in the evaluation. Ms Cohn then outlined the implementation of the recommendations so far.

Currently, the IMAS management structure consists of the IACG-MA at the principals' level, a Steering Group at the Director level and the IMAS Review Board at the technical and operational working level. The IMAS Steering Group currently consists of UNMAS, UNICEF, UNDP, UNOPS and the GICHD at the Director level. It was recommended to expand the membership to include, on a rotational basis, a donor and a representative of a national authority. Ms Cohn was reaching out to get views on this, such as how to select such a representative and whether they would be voting members or observers. Ms Cohn confirmed that the GICHD would now be the secretariat of the Steering Group.

The evaluation found that the IMAS Review Board (RB) has been meeting relatively effectively for many years, but it was recommended to formally review the Rules of Procedure and update the TOR for the chair (normally filled by UNMAS). The chair should not have a voting role and UNMAS should have a voting member on the Board. Members of the RB should rotate more often, there should be an emphasis on obtaining a better gender balance, and the ISUs of the Conventions should rotate through being a member. Ms Cohn concluded that IMAS 01.10 Guide for the Application of IMAS needs to be revised and updated. A drafting committee has been formed to do this, co-chaired by UNMAS and GICHD. The draft should be ready by December and then be considered by the Steering Group and IACG-MA. In closing the session, the Chair thanked Ms Cohn for the update and said that the implications of these changes on the MASG would be discussed in the next session.

4.5 Director UNMAS post. Ms Cohn advised that the official retirement date for the previous Director had just passed, so DPO were now in the process of revising the TORs and they will then advertise the post. As the post is at the D2 level it will be handled accordingly, and the final appointment will be made by the UN Secretary-General. Ms Cohn said that she would keep the MASG informed of the process of selecting a new UNMAS Director.

4.6 JMU update. Dr Suzanne Fiederlein, the Interim Director of the Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR) at James Madison University gave an update on the work of JMU, particularly with regards to the Mine Action Senior Managers' Courses. Between 2004 to 2019 JMU has conducted a total of 18 management courses, involving 391 participants from 58 countries. The power point presentation and a factsheet are available on the MASG website.

4.7 ITF Enhancing Human Security update. Ambassador Tomaz Lovrencic, the Director of the ITF Enhancing Human Security gave an update on the work of the ITF. He appreciated the ongoing support of donors to the ITF, including the USA, Germany, and Japan. He also noted the support from mine affected countries, such as a contribution of US\$300,000 from Serbia for a municipality in Bosnia Herzegovina. For the past six years, the ITF has been active in Libya by supporting LibMAC with funding from the US. The ITF has also supported the DMAC in Afghanistan. The ITF believes that the donor – recipient nexus needs to be optimized.

4.8 GICHD Update. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano, thanked the Acting Director of UNMAS for her leadership and for bringing the IMAS Governance Evaluation process forward. Ambassador Toscano mentioned that the informal NGO body that had made a presentation at the last MASG meeting, the Drumlanrig Group, was working on arranging two on-line events – one dealing with international cooperation and funding, and the other on the future of the national directors meeting. Ambassador Toscano provided a written update on the work of the GICHD and it is available on the MASG website.

5. Meeting Close. The Chair thanked all the speakers for their interesting presentations and for the inputs from the UN and other observers. He said that the date and location for the next MASG meeting would be discussed in due time and MASG participants be informed ASAP.

The meeting closed at 18.30 hours (CET).

End

Annex A. Donor Updates

(Secretariat Note: These donor updates were presented in the closed session of the MASG meeting, but they have been included in these minutes for general information.)

2.1 USA. The representative of the U.S. said that their budget for mine action was unchanged and secure, although they were experiencing a higher level of requests for funding. He also noted that the U.S. has observed a series of mine action accidents globally since the beginning of the COVID pandemic and has growing safety concerns. The US is reviewing the issue closely and is exploring various options for emphasizing the importance it places on operational safety matters.

2.2 Norway. The representative of Norway introduced himself, as he was new to the mine action portfolio in the MFA Oslo and this was his first MASG meeting. He thanked the German Chair of the MASG for the meeting and acknowledged the support of the USA with regards to the accidental death of two NPA staff in the Solomon Islands (which is a US funded project). Norway agrees with the APMBC concept of country coalitions (like Germany in Bosnia) and that they have seen benefits of mine action champions, like Norway is doing in Lebanon. Norway encourages other donors to do the same to promote a shared understanding. Norway is about to join the UN Security Council and it plans to promote the multi-lateral protection of civilians. Norway will continue to promote the APMBC Oslo Action Plan and looks forward to the CCM Lausanne Action Plan. The Chair agreed with the comments and said that role of Norway in Lebanon had been a model for Germany's country coalition in Bosnia.

2.3 Denmark. The representative of Denmark said that she was new to the mine action portfolio, but she had just returned from being the Ambassador to Mali. As a result, she had seen firsthand the problem of mines and ERW and the good work being done by the international community to address this. The mine action priorities for Denmark included renewing a four year unearmarked commitment to UNMAS and supporting Danish demining organizations. Denmark placed importance on encouraging local coordination. Denmark also promotes gender in mine action and noted that it was the 20th anniversary of the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security.

2.4 Netherlands. The representative of the Netherlands was new to the MASG, and he said that Netherlands had recently launched its new mine action programme, which totals EUR 51 million and runs until 2024. Four organizations (HALO, HI, MAG and DDG) will receive a total of EUR 41 million and EUR 10 million will be held for contingencies. The countries supported include Afghanistan, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Syria, South Sudan, and Ukraine. The Netherlands will replace Sudan as the President of the APMBC in 2021.

2.5 EEAS. The EEAS representative was also new to the MASG. He said that in 2019 the EU had provided EUR 68 million to different programmes in 11 mine affected countries, covering RE, clearance, VA, and advocacy activities. On a thematic level, the EU was supporting further efforts to improve national reporting in the context of the APMBC and were providing financial assistance to the ISU APMBC. Other thematic areas included addressing diverse cultural needs and gender issues. The EU is drafting a new instrument to support the APMBC and the Oslo Action Plan.

2.6 Ireland. The Irish representative said that Ireland is in the final year of a three-year multi-annual agreement with Halo trust. Through this programme there are Irish Aid funded demining teams in 5 countries - Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe, with funding of €2 million per annum. Ireland has traditionally made a one-off payment of €2 million each year in April to fund the programme. Due to COVID 19 shutdowns and the uncertainty around how Halo's planned activities would be affected, Ireland has disbursed funding incrementally this year based on progress reports received quarterly from Halo.

Ireland has shown flexibility within its programme countries and re-allocated funding from Colombia, where restrictions have affected the programme, to programmes in Afghanistan and Somalia. Ireland has also agreed to amend targets in line with reallocations. Four of the five programme countries are in line to meet their targets, with the one exception being South Sudan which was most impacted by COVID 19 with a long unplanned stand down. Ireland also has a programme managed by Embassy in Hanoi, which has been supporting landmine and UXO clearance in South East Asia since 1998, with almost €1.3m allocated in each of the last 3 years for ongoing programmes in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar. There have not been any major disruptions caused by COVID 19 to these programmes in South East Asia.

2.7 Australia. The representative of Australia said that unfortunately some of the of their unearmarked mine action global funds had to be reallocated to COVID 19 and bushfire responses. However, the bilateral funding continued for countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Myanmar, Syria, and Sri Lanka. Australia remains focussed on the Pacific and the biennial military EOD exercise called Operation Render Safe will continue.

2.8 Poland. The representative of Poland said that since 2015 Poland had supported UNMAS in the Gaza strip as part of its commitment to the UN. Poland supports the APMBC and CCW and provides funds to the ISU APMBC. Poland has demining troops engaged on UN peace keeping operations.

2.9 Germany. The representative of Germany said that funding for mine action in 2020 will amount to about EUR 40 Mio. Mine action project funding in Iraq had been affected by COVID 19. One project had to be suspended due to a long stand-still. One contract was delayed. Mid-term strategy review for German Strategy on humanitarian mine action ongoing, conducted by GICHD. Germany's focus remains on 10 priority countries. In 2020, additional funding was granted for Libya, Nigeria, and Yemen. Conference on humanitarian mine action with partner organizations about "Innovation and Strategies" took place 22nd September. Topics included survey with technical solutions such as drones and radar, as well as cross-border mine action in Somalia and Ethiopia.

End