

MINUTES

MASG MEETING -OPEN SESSION

ZOOM – TUESDAY, 27 APRIL 2022

1. OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Chair. The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Yves Marek of France, opened the Zoom meeting at 14.00 hours (CEST) and welcomed the 66 participants to the meeting. Ambassador Marek outlined the agenda for the meeting and noted that it had been some time since the last MASG meeting. He thanked Germany for their excellent work as Chair over the past two years. Ambassador Marek then informed the meeting that there had recently been some local MASG briefings in Afghanistan, and some in-country MASG meetings at the French Embassies in Colombia, Lebanon, Sudan, and Syria. Ambassador Marek mentioned that he had recently attended a mine action meeting organized by UNDP in Azerbaijan, and that he had undertaken a field visit while there. Finally, Ambassador Marek introduced Ambassador Gerard Chesnel, the President of the French national mine action agency, CNEMA.

1.2 Mr Philippe Bertoux, Director of Strategic Affairs and Disarmament, MFA, France.

Unfortunately, Mr Bertoux had been called away at short notice, so Ambassador Marek read a short statement from Mr Bertoux, who emphasized on the commitment of France to mine action, the importance of the role of the MASG, and the need in the context of the war in Ukraine where cluster munitions and mines are widely used, to face this new challenge.

1.3 Acting Director UNMAS. Ms Ilene Cohn thanked Germany for their leadership in chairing the MASG over the past two years and for hosting the NDM-UN last year. She noted that Germany had recently adopted a new Humanitarian Mine Action Strategy 2022 -23 and that they would also assume the chair of the APMBC next year. Ms Cohn then warmly welcomed France and Ambassador Marek as the Chair of the MASG for 2022, and thanked France for their support of mine action priorities in the General Assembly and Security Council. Ms Cohn also thanked all donors and partners for their political and financial support to mine action, including in the adoption of last year's mine action resolution. The resolution incorporated new language on the impact of contamination on children; voiced deep concern about the increased use of IEDs; stressed the need to include persons with disabilities, refugees and IDPs in planning of mine action programmes; and emphasized the positive impact of coordination bodies such as the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory (EORE) Group.

Ms Cohn then went on to report on several trends seen in 2021 data. As the world emerged from pandemic lockdowns, the number of explosive ordnance casualties, including civilians, peacekeepers and uniformed personnel in countries and territories with a UN presence, has risen to just over 12,000; on average more than one person killed or wounded every hour of every day. The highest numbers of casualties were recorded in Syria followed by Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Civilians continue to be the most affected by explosive ordnance, with increased percentage of civilian casualties from 61% to an alarming 81% in 2021. The unprecedentedly low figure of almost

9,000 total casualties reported for 2020 was likely linked to covid-related mobility and data-collection restrictions. In other trends, UNMAS had also noted an increase in civilians reached by Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) messages in UN funded programmes, improved national commitment to victim assistance, and that investments in national capacity building continued to deliver returns. Despite this progress, mine action needs are considerable in Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, South Caucasus, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.

Ms Cohn noted that at the last meeting – at the request of the Security Council – she briefed the MASG on the launch of the Independent Strategic Review (ISR) on United Nations peacekeeping operations’ responses to IEDs. The ISR has been finalized and the report was presented to the Security Council in December 2021. UNMAS – together with the Department of Operational Support – is leading Secretariat efforts to implement the recommendations. Ms Cohn thanked the Member States that enabled the ISR, with financial contributions or in-kind expertise, and called on donor support to bring the recommendations to fruition. Looking ahead, UNMAS are launching an Independent Review of the UNMAS mine action delivery model which was requested by various United Nations oversight and budget bodies. The Review will look at the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the current delivery model, review alternative delivery models and then recommend the best way forward to ensure UNMAS are delivering the most cost-effective programmes that have the greatest impact for mine-affected countries and communities, as well as for the safety and security of UN peacekeepers.

In conclusion, Ms Cohn encouraged the MASG to arrange a field visit to an affected country in 2022 and said that she was looking forward to the in-person MASG meeting to be held in Geneva in June.

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

1.4 European Union. Ambassador Marek gave tribute to the work of the EU and noted that they were a major donor who contributed between EUR 60 to 80 million per year to mine action. He acknowledged that sometimes funding programmes and responsibilities can be complicated and not always clear for NGO’s, the international community and even member states, because they are led by different agencies or country offices. France, as the current President of the EU, is pushing for more coordination and will continue to work on this for the next few months.

2. BRIEFINGS: REGIONAL MINE ACTION

2.1 Ukraine. Mr Guy Rhodes, the UNDP Chief Technical Adviser for mine action based in Lviv, and Ms Camille Wallen of the HALO Trust, gave a joint presentation on the ERW situation and needs in Ukraine. Mr Rhodes started by reporting that 5.2 million Ukrainians had become refugees and another 7.7 million were IDPs. It is estimated that there have been 5,400 civilian casualties since the current fighting started. There has been significant destruction of property and infrastructure. Heavy fighting is expected to continue in the East of the country. In the absence of any national level Non-Technical Survey, the extent of contamination is approximated from heatmaps that track the conflict activities. Mr Rhodes showed some maps of the situation that had been prepared using open-source information. At present, mine action partners are focusing efforts in the liberated

areas of Kyiv and the North. There is limited activity in the East and South of the country beyond EORE and some activities implemented through state capacities of the MOD, SESU and Police EOD.

There is a growing presence of agencies and organizations involved with mine action in Ukraine, and UNDP is the coordinator of the UN Protection sub-cluster on Mine Action in Ukraine. The recent responses have included.

- State Emergency Services (SES), Police EOD and the military have cleared 10s of thousands of items of explosive ordnance (SESU alone 78,000 items from over 10,000 tasks across 18,000 ha) (*This is rapid clearance, mostly surface items – it does not release land to IMAS and will need revisiting. Important for the international community to support*)
- Equipment support for SES & MOD – OSCE, DRC and NPA
- Significant desk top surveys – GICHD, HALO, DRC, FSD
- Widespread traditional and digital EORE campaigns – 10 partners
- UN conducting remote damage assessments (on-going in 5 cities)
- Debris/EO projects funded – through SESU & local demolition contractor

UNICEF has implemented a digital EORE campaign and throughout 2022 will engage teachers and children for face-to-face campaigns. UNICEF coordinate the EORE Working Group, and 10 national and international organizations are delivering EORE. Victim assistance needs to scale up urgently.

Overall, the key priorities for the next six months are.

1. Immediate support for national capacities of the SESU & NMAA to address their equipment requirements (UNDP hold lists updated this week)
2. Respond to the request of the Gov to deploy international experts to support mine action in Ukraine (letter from the Deputy Minister, MIA to UNCC)
3. Strengthen national mine action architecture for task ahead – Strategy, Standards, Information & Quality Management
4. EORE (particular focus on returnees & also professionals working in areas of risk)
5. Systematic Non-Technical Survey
6. Ground assessments to validate damage assessments done remotely
7. EOD to support for safe rubble clearance activities
8. Victim Assistance – identification, monitoring and support of survivors and families
9. Advocacy relevant for the use of explosive ordnance

Ms Camille Wallen of the HALO Trust then briefed the meeting from the NGO perspective. She noted that the needs in Ukraine were large and thanked UNDP for their coordination role. Ms Wallen said that HALO had been in Ukraine before the current conflict, and by using open-source information had some idea of the huge spread of ERW contamination, but no-one had the full picture. Other NGOs active in Ukraine included DRC and DCA, who hope to start clearance work soon, and HI who have deployed EORE and VA teams to four areas. MAG and NPA are currently seeking registration to work in-country. In some positive news, the Government is looking at granting exemptions from military conscription for local humanitarian workers (eg deminers), and they may also relax peacetime laws restricting the transport, storage and use of explosives by

foreign organizations. Finally, Ms Wallen requested donors for flexibility and urgent short terms funding needs, but also noted that there would be on-going longer-term needs.

The ISU APMBC asked about the location of POM 3 landmines and the Chair asked about the use of cluster munitions. Mr Rhodes said that he did not have specific locations for the use of POM 3 mines. The nature of the contamination varied and dug-in defensive positions usually contained more mines. There were reports of large numbers of anti-tank mines to the North and West of Kyiv. Vast quantities of abandoned ordnance have been left behind. With regards to cluster munitions, there have been reports and evidence of their use. Mr Rhodes stressed that all organizations were in an information gathering stage and they would have more knowledge in due course.

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

2.2 Afghanistan. Mr Paul Heslop, the UNMAS Programme Manager in Kabul gave an update on the current situation, particularly with regards to coordination. Mr Heslop noted that since August 2021 the whole of Afghanistan is now accessible for mine action, which for some areas, is the first time in 20 years. At present, 220 teams employing a total of a workforce of 2,557 people are active throughout the country. This is half of the number of September 2021, and the programme easily has the capacity to expand back to this level, or even up to 10,000 staff if the funding was available. One of the main issues faced by UNMAS is coordination. Because of sanctions on the de-facto authorities (DFA – or Taliban) the Department of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) now has extremely limited capacity. UNMAS had proposed setting up a UN coordination body to oversee the coordination of humanitarian mine action activities. Until recently this had been rejected by DMAC. However, Mr Heslop reported that he had just received approval from the DMAC for UNMAS to establish a UN – Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre (UN HMACCA). The new Centre will only coordinate humanitarian mine action, including priority setting, tasking, QA and tracking. Mr Heslop then outlined the funding needs to operationalize this new coordination centre, which are to be capped at US\$2 million. UNMAS are seeking US\$800,000 for 2022 and US\$1.5 million for 2023. This would cover rent, fuel, equipment, staff, etc. for UN HMACCA, and no money would go the DFA or DMAC.

In question time, the representative of Australia asked about steps being taken to improve local capacity, and about the support for gender equality. Mr Heslop said that UNMAS had agreement from the DFA that mine action operators can implement the ‘mahrammat’ system where a women can work if accompanied by a male relative. This is already occurring in some cases, and the plan is to have a female with every type of mine action team i.e. survey, clearance, EORE and VA teams. The female role would be to engage with women in local communities. Each of the planned 30 non-technical survey teams will have a female representative. It is hoped that between 8-10% of the MAPA workforce will eventually be female, which will be more than under the previous regime. On a question about assessing impact, Mr Heslop said that the non-technical survey will start after Eid, and it will also look at the impact of already cleared areas. UNMAS has launched a Global Information Tool to link up with other agencies like OCHA and UNHCR. The consolidate data is used to set priorities for survey, clearance, and risk education.

The UNMAS power point presentation, a fact sheet and a document outlining the revised coordination arrangements are on the MASG website.

2.3 South Caucasus. In introducing the topic, the Chair noted that both Azerbaijan and Armenia are not yet part of the conventions, but that it is hoped that they join it, even unilaterally. Ambassador Marek said that he had recently visited the region twice- in October 2021 with a French parliamentary delegation, and in March 2022 for a conference held by UNDP and ANAMA. His impression was that mine action results could be rapid for the population in many areas. The question of the heavily contaminated 'contact line' will take longer to solve. ANAMA is very competent and there is a strong will of the authorities to demine the country, and it is worth helping them. France has already purchased EUR 500,000 of equipment for ANAMA.

2.3a. Azerbaijan. Mr Donald MacDonald, the survey adviser for UNDP Baku spoke about Azerbaijan. He noted that the ERW contamination was the result of 30 years of conflict and that the extent and complexity of the contamination was high. It is estimated that 700,00 IDPs need to return to the area. The government agency ANAMA has 1,000 deminers and uses machines and dogs. Four local demining companies and the Turkish military also have clearance capacity in the country. Mr MacDonald outlined the funding needs during the period 2021-2025, which currently has a shortfall of US\$17.5 million. The main needs going forward are.

- More resources/capacity
- Support to the National Structure to better manage the scale of the problem and appropriate response
- New and adaptive approaches including the use of the latest technology
- Cohesive IDP return strategy

The UNDP power point presentation on Azerbaijan is available on the MASG website.

2.3b Armenia. Mr Pascal Simon, the UNDP Chief Technical Adviser in Yerevan, said that the contamination in Armenia was primarily from the 1988 – 1994 conflict, along with additional ERW from the 2020 hostilities. A total of 744 landmine victims have been recorded. The government has established the Centre for Humanitarian Demining / Expertise (CHDE) to coordinate activities, and a new legal framework for the sector is in preparation. Current partners include UNDP, UNICEF, HALO Trust, GICHD, ICRC, ARMRCs, Action Against Hunger and Mission Armenia. In 2022 UNDP has helped strengthen coordination through regular meetings with stakeholders, and the GICHD assisted with the developing a National MA Strategy. In 2023, work will continue to strengthen coordination, implement survey, clearance, EORE and VA activities, provide training and equipment – all with an estimated budget of US\$2.5 million.

The UNDP power point presentation on Armenia is available on the MASG website.

2.4 Mauritania. Colonel Mohamedou Baham, the Director of the National Humanitarian Demining Program for Development (PNDHD) of Mauritania gave an update on the current situation. He said that most contamination was a result of the Western Sahara conflict of 1975 – 1978. Mines continue to kill and maim civilians and they block economic activity such as mining, tourism, trade, grazing and other activities. Colonel Baham gave examples of the impact of ERW, including cluster munitions, in various parts of the country. Mauritania has made huge efforts to raise awareness of landmines among the population, through risk education messages and seminars, and by inclusion in the school curriculum. Between 2018 – 2022 there have been 631 mine victims, of which 370 died.

The PNDHD has developed a five-year action plan for 2022 – 2026 to support their APMBC extension request. The plan includes survey, clearance EORE, training and capacity building. The funding needs are US\$1.8 million per year.

The PNDHD power point presentation on Mauritania is available on the MASG website.

3. BRIEFINGS: THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 Study on Operational Efficiency in Mine Action. The Chair introduced the topic by stating that it was important for donors to have accurate facts to support their decision making on funding. As a result, the MASG had initiated, and France has funded the GICHD to undertake a *Study on Operational Efficiency in Mine Action*. Mr Armen Harutyunyan, the Adviser on Operational Efficiency at the GICHD gave an update on the scope of the study. Mr Harutyunyan outlined the difference between efficiency and effectiveness and said that this study would only be looking at efficiency, that can be described as a ratio of inputs and outputs, e.g., cost/m² cleared. The study would look at a range of key performance indicators, such as:

- Cost per m² of land cleared
- Cost per EO item found
- Cleared versus released ratios
- M²/EO item
- Asset time/EO item
- M²/asset/time (m²/Deminer/day)

The study will involve a review of open-source data in 15 mine action programmes. The challenges involved data accuracy, lack of consistency of units of measurement and access to data. Mr Harutyunyan then gave the results of some preliminary work, for example on cost per square metre cleared – which averaged US\$1.55 across the 14 programmes, and cost per item of EO found, which was US\$6,285. Mr Harutyunyan said they were looking at the influence of factors like geography, competition, completion deadlines, land release policies, influence of conventions, governance, etc. The GICHD plan to complete the desk review by 30 April 2022, undertake data collection from operators between now and August 2022, and present the final report to the MASG in October 2022.

The GICHD power point presentation on the study is available on the MASG website.

4. UPDATE FROM OBSERVERS

4.1 GICHD. The Chief of Mine Action Programmes at the GICHD, Mr Valon Kumnova, gave an update on the work of the GICHD. Mr Kumnova first noted that the GICHD has had a long cooperation with Ukraine and since 24 February has been carefully assessing the viability of its support. The GICHD participates in the various mine action coordination platforms in Ukraine. The GICHD is facilitating the National Working Group on Information Management and is secretary to the EORE working

group. The needs of Ukraine will be considerable, and the GICHD will be well placed to provide support like capacity building. Secondly, the GICHD is working a case study on how mine action contributes to sustainable development in Colombia, by seeking to provide an evidence-based, comprehensive analysis of the impact of mine action on sustainable development in the medium and long term. In November 2021 the GICHD facilitated a review of Zimbabwe's National Mine Action Strategy 2018 – 2025. The GICHD conducted one-week Regional Quality Management (QM) Course for the Balkans in Belgrade from 24 November to 1 December 2021. Finally, the GICHD is arranging a risk management seminar for the ASEAN mine action centre in Phnom Penh in June 2022.

The full version of the GICHD Update is available on the MASG website

4.2 OAS. The Senior Adviser for Mine Action and SALW in the Department of Public Security of the OAS in Washington DC, Mr Carl Case, said that the OAS objective is to see Central America as the first region in the world to be a landmine free zone. The OAS would continue to work with Colombia and the Government had agreed to fund QM work that would be undertaken by the OAS. Ecuador and Peru have APMBC Article 5 deadlines of December 2022 and 2024 respectively and Mr Case requested continued donor support for the region. Mr Case then said he was retiring from his post after more than 10 years and he introduced his replacement, Ms Tammy Hall, formerly of the GICHD. Ms Hall said that it was important to be able to help smaller countries achieve their clearance deadlines, as was the situation in Central America. The Chair thanked Mr Case for his input to the MASG over the years.

4.3 ITF Enhancing Human Security. Ambassador Tomaz Lovrencic said that he would like to respond to the question posed by the Chair about challenges faced by mine action operators. He believed that one major problem is the increasing difficulty in working in the international banking system. It was difficult for bodies like the ITF to fund local operators working under sanctions regimes. This led to projects being paused or cancelled. He urged donors to help address this issue by putting pressure on regulating bodies. He believed that many organizations, not just the ITF, were facing similar problems.

4.4 JMU CISR. The Interim Director of the Centre for Stabilization and Recovery (CISR), Dr Suzanne Fiederlein, gave a short update on the role of CISR in producing the annual US State Department report titled *To Walk the Earth in Safety*. She noted that the 21st edition of the report had been released on 4 April 2022 and it details the US Government's collaborations with host nations and implementing partners to promote safe clearance of landmines and ERW and securing the safe disposal of excess SALW and munitions. Since 1993, the US has invested more than US\$4.2 billion in more than 100 countries and territories. The full report can be found at the following link <https://www.state.gov/reports/to-walk-the-earth-in-safety-2022/>

The CISR power point presentation can be found on the MASG website.

4.5 Drumlanrig Group of NGOs. The coordinator of the Drumlanrig Group, Mr Darren Cormack (Director MAG), gave a brief presentation on the wider implications of the Ukraine crisis, as they may affect mine action. The first point he addressed was the increased cost of doing business and the uncertainty of funding. This included the increased cost of key commodities, increasing staff costs and a reduction in funding to mine action. The second point included instability at the local,

regional, and global levels. This included food insecurity and a humanitarian crisis, involving the movement of people within and between countries, and the increased pressure to use suspected contaminated land. As an example of the potential challenges faced by INGOs, Mr Cormack noted that nine of the countries where MAG currently work did not support the UN GA resolution against Russia, which in an increasingly polarised political context could have implications for independence and neutrality, which are important principles to manage.

The Drumlanrig Group power point presentation can be found on the MASG website

4.6 ISU APMBC. The Director of the ISU APMBC, Mr Juan Carlos Ruan reminded members that the APMBC Intersessional will be held between 20 – 22 June 2022 in Geneva, just before the NDM-UN. The invitations for the Intersessionals are due out in a day or two. The meeting will be important because it is mid-way through the Oslo Action Plan, leading to the 2025 goals. Mr Ruan said that we need to strengthen donor – mine affected country links, as 33 countries still have an Article 5 clearance deadline. Mr Ruan asked donors to consider funding some of the not so high-profile countries that are close to completion.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Next MASG meeting. The Chair outlined that the next meetings are planned for;

- Geneva, Friday 24 June 2022, in-person, in the margins of the 25th NDM-UN
- New York, Thursday, 20 October 2022, in-person, at the French Mission to the UN New York

6. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair thanked Ms Abigail Hartley of UNMAS and the MASG Secretary for their work in preparing the meeting. He also thanked all the presenters and speakers and said that the minutes of the meeting and the presentations would be made available shortly.

The meeting closed at 16.45 hours (CEST)

Final (as at 6 May 22)