



**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**  
**Ninth Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**  
**Statement on General Exchange of Views**

**Geneva, 9-10 November 2015**

*Delivered by Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Director, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)*

Mr. President,

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprising United Nations<sup>1</sup> entities involved in mine action.

The United Nations congratulates you on your election as President of the Ninth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Rest assured of the United Nations' strong support throughout your presidency. I take this opportunity to also congratulate our colleague from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for his nomination as Secretary-General of the Conference.

Wars kill twice. Wars, including conflicts lasting just a few weeks, have left behind thousands of explosive remnants of war that put civilians, again, at continued risk of death or injury. As mentioned by the Secretary-General in his latest report to the General Assembly on Assistance in Mine Action, millions live in proximity to areas contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

The percentage of victims of ERW is increasing steadily. That is worrisome and unacceptable. Women, girls, boys and men are killed or injured every day. In particular, children are among the first victims of explosive devices left behind during or long after the war is over. Recent data<sup>2</sup> shows that almost three out of four ERW casualties were children. Millions of others have been displaced and are unable to return to their homes because of the threat posed by these hazards.

Just a few weeks ago, on 16 October, when the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, the draft resolution<sup>3</sup> on Assistance in Mine Action, it expressed it was "[...] deeply alarmed by [...] the growing number of explosive remnants of war, as a result of armed conflicts[...]" This is a reflection of both the magnitude of the problem and the global recognition of its impact on civilians. I would like to seize this

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) (Chair), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer status), and the World Bank (Observer status).

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF

<sup>3</sup> A/C.4/70/L.8



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opportunity to express the Secretary-General's appreciation to Member States on this important consensus resolution and for their recognition of, and support to, the important role of the United Nations.

The United Nations has a mine action presence in about 85 percent of countries and territories considered "heavily" or "very heavily" contaminated by explosive remnants of war. In many cases, it may take decades to clear them of ERW: and that, only if timely, predictable and sustainable funding and technical resources are made available. For instance, ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen and the Lake Chad Basin region will result in further contamination by ERW.

As a specific example, in Somalia, UNMAS community-liaison teams work to identify and destroy stockpiles of abandoned explosive ordnance along a number of routes that link the country's major cities. Such abandoned ammunition can be used to construct improvised explosive devices.

Regarding Article 5 of Protocol V, on "Other precautions for the protection of the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects from the risks and effects of ERW", the United Nations continues to provide technical support to affected States towards meeting this important obligation. For instance, UNICEF Country Offices together with UNMAS, directly support risk education programmes that protect civilians from explosive remnants of war in many countries, including through the reinforcement of incident monitoring systems. They support the development and implementation of mine and ERW risk education and survivor assistance projects, as well as advocacy for protecting civilians from the impact of ERW and to end the use of indiscriminate weapons. The United Nations encourages initiatives from High Contracting Parties, and other parties to armed conflict, to take all feasible precautions to protect civilian populations.

Cooperation and Assistance is of utmost importance to allow High Contracting Parties to fulfil their obligations under this Protocol, especially in support of Article 3 on clearance, removal and destruction of ERW. To this end, UNMAS has coordinated the launch of the online Portfolio of Mine Action in 2015 in partnership with national authorities and agencies, such as UNDP and UNICEF. It compiles information on country or territory specific landmine/ERW contamination, and provides an overview of the global extent of contamination and funding requirements, thus representing an important tool for current and future assistance in mine action.

The United Nations considers that the implementation of Article 3 is key to minimizing the risk posed by ERW. It commits High Contracting Parties and parties to armed conflicts to the obligation of marking and clearing, removing or destroying explosive remnants of war within the territories under their control. Parties must also take measures to reduce the risks posed by ERW until clearance takes place. Article 3 also gives users of explosive ordnance the



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responsibility to provide assistance to facilitate the marking and clearance of ERW in territories outside their control, resulting from the conduct of military operations.

In addition, the United Nations continues to consider that effective implementation of Article 4 of Protocol V, on recording, retaining and transmission of information, is critical to reducing deaths and injuries caused by ERW as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The United Nations reiterates its interest in receiving such information, as it would enhance timely mine action planning and the protection of civilians.

Mr. President,

Allow me the opportunity to mention a few in-country examples. UNICEF is supporting Myanmar in improving its data collection systems on the impact of mines and ERW through the conduction of Knowledge Attitudes Practices surveys in four states and three regions and the strengthening of the national injury surveillance system. This data is used to prioritize risk reduction and victim assistance strategies as well as to support advocacy efforts on International Humanitarian Law, including the CCW. In Eritrea, Mali, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the scaling up of national injury surveillance systems as a tool for information gathering on ERW related injuries is laying the ground for strengthened policy making and advocacy.

In Somalia, UNMAS is working with the Somali Police Force to train specialized police EOD and IED<sup>4</sup>– Defeat teams to respond to explosive threats in towns and cities throughout the country. This effort not only protects civilians from the threat, it also supports the expansion of rule of law into areas recently regained from Al-Shabaab control. UNMAS has also begun a pilot project along the Somali–Ethiopian border for community-based explosive hazard clearance. This project removes explosive ordnance whilst providing men and women with employment and stimulating the local economy.

Such initiatives are of particular significance in the context of the United Nations commitment to develop national capacities, and ultimately transfer mine action programmes and responsibilities to affected States.

In Mali, UNMAS uses the opportunity of its engagement with the national authorities to assist the National Commission against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (CNALPC) in complying with its international obligations regarding mines, ERW, weapons and ammunition, especially for the implementation of the CCW.

In closing, on matters related to the CCW, the United Nations continues to strongly advocate for the universalization of Protocol V and compliance with its legal provisions.

Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).