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Assistance in mine action

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period from August 2021 to July 2023, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/74](#) on assistance in mine action. The report covers the implementation of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023 by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, which is chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, with the support of the Mine Action Service, and brings together actors from across the United Nations system.¹

2. Since the previous report, explosive ordnance contamination has continued to endanger the lives of civilians by killing and maiming indiscriminately; obstruct the safe movement of civilians, access to services and delivery of humanitarian assistance; affect land cultivation and local resilience; and hamper the rehabilitation of public infrastructure.

3. Data provided by United Nations programmes² identified 9,198 casualties in 2022 – more than one every hour – caused by explosive ordnance, including explosive remnants of war, mines and improvised explosive devices (see figure I). Civilians continued to be the most affected, constituting 73 per cent of all casualties in 2022. The highest number of casualties in countries and territories with active United

* [A/78/150](#).

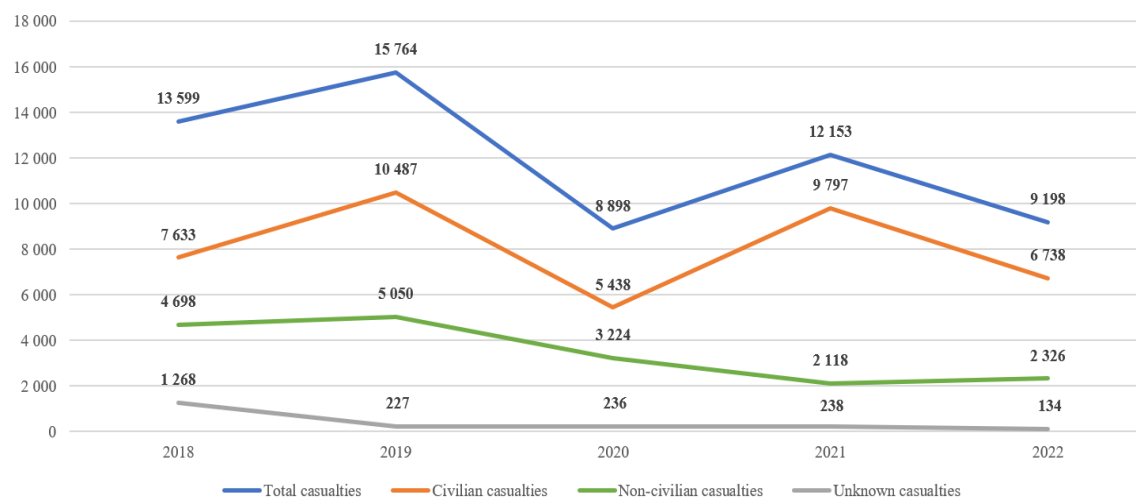
¹ In this report, “United Nations” refers to members and observers of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. For a complete list of members and observers, see www.mineaction.org/en/un-inter-agency-coordination-group-mine-action-iacg-ma.

² Unless otherwise indicated, data is drawn from the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023, which for 2022 reflects input from 27 of the 28 countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations. Data compiled through this mechanism relies on both United Nations and national sources. For more details, see the dashboard at www.mineaction.org/en/interactive-dashboard-of-un-mine-action-strategy.



Nations mine action operations was reported in the Syrian Arab Republic, followed by Somalia and Iraq.³

Figure I
Casualties caused by explosive ordnance in countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations, 2018–2022



Source: Data drawn from the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023.

4. Improvised explosive devices accounted for 46 per cent of casualties caused by explosive ordnance, an increase from 38 per cent in 2021.⁴ The year 2022 saw the highest number of incidents involving improvised explosive devices on record in Somalia.⁵ In Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere, the placement of such devices on major roads indiscriminately killed and injured civilians. Use of improvised explosive devices in the Central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions has been an essential part of tactics of non-State armed groups against national security forces to cut off access and expand territorial control, also hampering humanitarian responses. In Burkina Faso, for example, road access to major urban centres has sharply diminished over the last years due to improvised explosive devices, requiring some humanitarian actors to establish air bridges.

5. The threat posed by improvised explosive devices has progressively expanded, with widening implications. The design, size and methods of emplacement vary, and tactics continuously evolve to circumvent countermeasures used to locate and defuse these devices. Improvised explosive devices are inexpensive to fabricate and simple to produce using explosive material from unsecured munitions or easily available precursors that have legitimate dual uses, such as chemicals used for agricultural purposes or material used in commercial mining. Technology and components are

³ Monitoring and evaluation survey estimates suggest that Afghanistan figures are underreported due to a reduced reporting period (9 months instead of 12 months) and limited access to the source of casualty information. Projected estimates put the casualty rate in Afghanistan at 851, which is higher than that of Iraq.

⁴ For the purposes of the present report, casualty figures from improvised explosive devices encompass those arising from all such devices, including anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature/victim-operated improvised explosive devices. Of the casualties resulting from improvised explosive devices, 9 per cent were attributed to anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature/victim-operated improvised explosive devices; 3 per cent to command-detonated improvised explosive devices; and 88 per cent to improvised explosive devices of an unknown type.

⁵ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Somalia.

easily shared across borders and regions, underscoring the need for regional and multifaceted responses.

6. The urbanization of conflict and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas continued to cause suffering among civilians and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. Significantly, the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas was adopted and endorsed by 83 States in November 2022. The Political Declaration reinforces respect for international humanitarian law by committing States to restrict or refrain from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas when their use may be expected to cause harm to civilians or civilian objects and to ensure assistance to victims.

7. Ongoing or renewed hostilities led to reports of new or worsened contamination. In the Syrian Arab Republic, approximately one in three communities is estimated to be contaminated by explosive ordnance.⁶ All 15 States and regions of Myanmar are believed to be contaminated with explosive ordnance.⁷ Since the outbreak of hostilities in the Sudan on 15 April 2023, the use of heavy artillery and shells⁸ is expected to have resulted in extensive levels of explosive ordnance contamination in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country. In Ukraine, while it is anticipated that vast tracts of land are now unsafe for civilians and agricultural use, the full extent of explosive ordnance contamination can only be determined once conditions allow for assessments to be conducted.

8. Extreme weather events and climate change increasingly impacted negatively on the protection of civilians from explosive ordnance threats and created new challenges. Seasonal flooding in Yemen caused the migration of mines; in some cases, the strong water currents moved heavy anti-vehicle mines long distances, leading to new hazards for civilians. In Somalia, recurring droughts caused communities to migrate into contaminated areas. In Abyei, the flooding of land and roads in consecutively heavier and longer rainy seasons shortened the period during which clearance activities can be conducted.

9. Conflicts persist and new contamination occurs daily. Yet, the United Nations continued to deliver mine action results, contribute to building resilience among communities and capacities of national authorities, assist victims in accessing services, and strengthen the integration of mine action into humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and peace and security initiatives.

II. Update on international legal instruments related to mine action

10. The United Nations continued to advocate the universalization and implementation of relevant legal instruments falling within the scope of the present report.⁹ Regrettably, there has been limited progress in terms of new accessions.

11. To promote universalization, in line with the 2021 Lausanne Action Plan,¹⁰ successive Presidents of the Convention on Cluster Munitions encouraged States that

⁶ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in the Syrian Arab Republic.

⁷ [S/2023/345](#).

⁸ [S/2023/355](#).

⁹ Convention on Cluster Munitions; Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and associated protocols; and Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

¹⁰ [CCM/CONF/2021/6](#), annex II.

are not yet parties to join the Convention. With the ratification by Nigeria on 28 February 2023, the Convention now has 111 States parties.

12. Continued outreach ensured progress in the universalization of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) and its associated protocols.¹¹ Malawi acceded to the Convention in 2022, bringing the number of States parties to 126. Also in 2022, the Philippines expressed consent to be bound by the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V), bringing the number of States parties to 97.

13. No new accessions to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention) have taken place since December 2017. Thirty-three States parties still have clearance obligations under article 5. While anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature fall within the scope of the Convention,¹² such devices continue to be widely deployed.

14. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to ensure that victims, including those affected by explosive ordnance, have access to health care, rehabilitation, employment, social protection and education.¹³ A total of 186 States and the European Union are now parties to the Convention, with Equatorial Guinea acceding on 25 March 2022, Timor-Leste on 17 January 2023 and Solomon Islands ratifying on 22 June 2023.

III. Reporting under the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023

A. Strengthening protection against the risk and socioeconomic impacts of explosive ordnance

15. While casualty rates fell in Iraq between 2018 and 2022 by more than 83 per cent, from 4,926 to 799, and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic dropped to an all-time low of 20 in 2022, in many other countries explosive ordnance casualties mounted. For instance, casualties in the past five years more than quadrupled in Burkina Faso (from 109 in 2019 to 456 in 2022) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (from 31 in 2018 to 129 in 2022) and more than doubled in the Central African

¹¹ In the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, protocols relevant to mine action are primarily Protocol II, as amended, and Protocol V. Both apply also in non-international armed conflicts, and all parties to the conflict, including non-State actors, are bound to apply the prohibitions and restrictions in the protocols.

¹² Unlike remote or non-victim activated improvised explosive devices, anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature are regulated by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Article 2, paragraph 1, defines an anti-personnel mine as "a mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons". As long as the design of the device is such that through its normal functioning it would be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and generate the same design-dependent effects of incapacitating, injuring or killing one or more persons, it fits the definition of an anti-personnel mine under the Convention.

¹³ Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that States parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

Republic (from 21 in 2018 to 52 in 2022) and Myanmar (from 192 in 2018 to 392 in 2022).

16. Children continued to be particularly at risk from explosive ordnance threats. In 2022, the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict verified more than 8,600 children maimed or killed in 24 countries and the Lake Chad basin region. For over 25 per cent of those children, explosive ordnance was responsible.¹⁴

17. These trends underscore the need for context-appropriate explosive ordnance risk education, as well as life-saving survey and clearance action.

Survey and clearance

18. In 2022, United Nations funds enabled the clearance and release of 163 km² of previously contaminated land, with the largest released areas recorded in Iraq, Cambodia and Afghanistan.

19. Lebanon declared its first mine-free province in December 2021. Between December 2021 and April 2023, the United Nations conducted the first clearance of land to humanitarian mine action standards in the Syrian Arab Republic, clearing around 2 million square metres in Government-controlled Darayya, rural Damascus, thereby allowing for safe access to a limited amount of land for agricultural use in an area otherwise extensively devastated by years of armed conflict.

20. The United Nations introduced innovative tools and new technical clearance methods to address specific challenges arising from explosive ordnance contamination in urban areas. In Libya, mechanical rubble inspection was used in urban settings where hostilities took place and in ammunition storage areas, thereby facilitating clearance operations in densely populated environments where traditional methods would not be as safe or effective. In Ukraine, satellite, drone and ground verification techniques facilitated debris clearance.

21. Between March and May 2022, the United Nations deployed an explosive ordnance expert from the Mine Action Service to Lviv and Kyiv in Ukraine to support response planning and the opening of humanitarian routes, including between Kyiv and Dnipro and between Kyiv and Chernihiv. Mine action expertise also informed the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (Black Sea Initiative), signed in July 2022, to facilitate the export of food and fertilizer from Ukrainian ports as part of broader efforts to address global food security. As part of the protection cluster in Ukraine, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) chairs the mine action sub-cluster, which brings together 14 organizations and serves as an information-sharing and coordination platform. Furthermore, as part of a United Nations-wide effort to assist farmers and rural families, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, with a mine action technical partner, initiated activities in Kharkiv Province in May 2023, prioritizing the release of agricultural land for productive use by surveying potentially contaminated areas, while also demining and providing technical support to rehabilitate soil, as required.

22. In Afghanistan, the United Nations carried out surveys of potentially contaminated areas in Helmand, Kandahar, Kunduz and Uruzgan Provinces, sharing information on contamination with humanitarian responders assisting communities that, prior to August 2021, were inaccessible due to intensity of hostilities.

23. In response to the dire humanitarian situation resulting from the conflict in Ethiopia, the United Nations conducted rapid risk assessments at humanitarian

¹⁴ [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#).

intervention sites and along humanitarian corridors in Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions.

24. Clearance operations also fostered durable solutions for displacement, reconstruction and socioeconomic development. In Ulu, in Blue Nile State in the Sudan, following the release of land, more than 17,000 people safely returned and resettled.¹⁵ In Sinjar, Iraq, clearance operations in residential areas continued to facilitate safe access for internally displaced persons to return to their places of origin.

25. In Somalia, a community-based clearance project along the border with Ethiopia generated employment opportunities for more than 158 Somali men and women, 30 per cent of whom were under the age of 30, consistent with the youth and peace and security agenda.¹⁶ In Southern Kordofan State, the Sudan, in 2021, clearance of over 50,000 m² of land by the United Nations, coupled with the delivery of farming tools to 3,000 households and the rehabilitation of water and educational facilities, improved living conditions for local populations and contributed to community development.¹⁷

26. Innovative approaches were developed and applied to better understand and quantify the socioeconomic impact of mine action. The Cambodian Mine Action Authority, supported by UNDP, assessed the socioeconomic contribution of clearance activities to reveal that the price of cleared land had increased by 316 per cent.¹⁸ In 2022, post-activity impact assessment surveys in Iraq showed that 94 per cent of land made safe is now in productive use for agriculture, housing, infrastructure and roads.¹⁹

Explosive ordnance risk education

27. Many affected communities lack access to educational materials and resources that explain the threat, which can prove lethal, especially for children who may pick up and play with objects that could be explosive ordnance. Such threats were underlined in an incident involving the detonation of suspected unexploded ordnance in the Shabelle Hoose region of Somalia in June 2023, in which at least 22 children were killed.²⁰ Education on how to live safely within a contaminated environment and how to safely report explosive ordnance threats is critical.

28. In 2022, over 5.5 million people were reached through in-person explosive ordnance risk education delivered or funded by the United Nations and tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable communities. Compared to 2021, in-person risk education efforts reached twice as many people in 2022 – the highest recorded number since tracking through the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023 began.

29. The Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group, established in 2019 and co-led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a rotating non-governmental organization, provided guidance to operators and national authorities to improve risk education.

30. The United Nations continued to enhance remote risk education delivery methods. UNICEF and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining co-led the first-ever workshop on digital solutions for explosive ordnance risk education in May 2022 and the development of a digital vision and five-year action plan. In Afghanistan, the United Nations partnered with BBC Media Action to conduct a risk education mass media campaign that reached 22.4 million people

¹⁵ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in the Sudan.

¹⁶ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Somalia.

¹⁷ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in the Sudan.

¹⁸ Data provided by UNDP.

¹⁹ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Iraq.

²⁰ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1137582>.

through television and radio broadcasts as well as social media channels.²¹ In Somalia, the United Nations distributed 1,971 solar-powered risk education talking devices to 188 remote locations where face-to-face explosive ordnance risk education was impossible. Afterwards, 98 per cent of beneficiaries reported increased knowledge of the explosive threat and 86 per cent reported a subsequent behaviour change.²²

31. Delivery of explosive ordnance risk education continued in an inclusive and targeted manner. In Abyei, the United Nations engaged with children by developing short plays and comic books. These efforts achieved the desired level of information retention, and importantly, as at July 2023, no accidents involving children have occurred in the Abyei Area since 2021.²³ In Yemen, following the identification of children with hearing impairments as one of the most vulnerable groups likely to be excluded from risk education messaging, the United Nations and partners systematically included sign language in materials and activities in 22 governorates. The United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory mobilized a “Cinema Bus” to deliver messaging to children in remote areas, including those with disabilities, through animated films, illustrations and songs.

32. The sustainability of explosive ordnance risk education relies on at-risk communities being able to deliver risk education themselves. In Cambodia, risk education training courses for police officers enabled them to train local communities. In Iraq, the United Nations trained religious leaders as community focal points to deliver risk education during Friday prayers. In north-eastern Nigeria, the United Nations trained a local non-governmental organization to conduct a novel peer-to-peer project for children in internally displaced persons camps, resulting in the training of 100 internally displaced children as risk education peer educators, who then reached a further 1,000 internally displaced children with life-saving messages. A post-training assessment suggested that 100 per cent of participants had sufficient knowledge and understanding of safe behaviour, a significant increase from 40 per cent at the outset of the project.²⁴

33. Integration of explosive ordnance risk education into outreach efforts of other sectors amplified messaging. For example, the United Nations integrated risk education into polio drives and mobile health and nutrition services combined with mass multi-messaging initiatives to successfully reach almost 2.9 million children and adults in Afghanistan.²⁵ In Abyei, the United Nations distributed face masks as a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) mitigation measure that included messages raising awareness of explosive remnant of war threats.

34. United Nations explosive ordnance risk education efforts also proved adaptable to emerging risks. In Ukraine, following the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in February 2022, the United Nations launched a risk education campaign in February 2022, combining mass messaging with interpersonal delivery methods, and reactivated the mine action sub-cluster’s Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Working Group to coordinate emergency interventions involving governmental entities, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. During escalations of hostilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the United Nations delivered emergency risk education messages to help vulnerable populations build resilience.

²¹ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Afghanistan.

²² Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Somalia.

²³ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Abyei.

²⁴ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Nigeria.

²⁵ Data provided by UNICEF.

B. Reintegration and access of victims and family members to health and education services

35. The United Nations continued to make progress in meeting the needs of persons who have suffered explosive ordnance injuries. In 2022, 14 United Nations programmes (4 more than in 2018) were supporting referral pathways, which link victims²⁶ to services provided by the State or other partners.

36. In Colombia, the United Nations supported the national mine action authority in updating existing referral pathways so that 84 municipalities are now able to support new and existing victims.²⁷ In Nigeria, the United Nations mapped services for victims leading to the establishment of a referral pathway, enhancing access to services and support systems.

37. In some cases, where referral pathways were unavailable, the United Nations provided direct assistance and economic opportunities for victims. In 2022, UNICEF and partners expanded victim assistance to reach almost 5,700 children in 13 countries and territories – an almost sixfold increase from the nearly 1,000 children supported in 11 countries and territories in 2021. Services also expanded to include cash transfers, family treatment and rehabilitation, as well as referrals to health services and provision of livelihood support. In the Syrian Arab Republic, 181 child victims were provided with quarterly cash assistance and case management services. In Yemen, 245 child victims in the most affected governorates received prostheses and referrals to appropriate services.²⁸

38. In Cambodia, the United Nations supported adult skills training, small business management training, job placements and grants for the Cambodian Disabled People's Organization and other service providers and rehabilitation centres. In Lebanon, the United Nations supported the launch of training courses geared towards economic empowerment, such as beekeeping, liquid detergent making and the fitting of prostheses.

39. The United Nations continued to advocate and support the development of relevant legal and policy frameworks. Efforts included assisting the Cambodian Mine Action Authority in the revision of the national standard on victim assistance and practical guidelines for service providers; the Somalia Explosive Management Authority in the development of the first national action plan for victim and disability assistance and national victim assistance policy, with a focus on victims of explosive ordnance; and Lebanon in the adoption of a national disability policy in 2022, which became the twentieth country or territory with active United Nations mine action operations to do so.

40. On 3 December 2022, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Giles Duley, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was appointed as the first United Nations Global Advocate for persons with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations. As the Global Advocate, Mr. Duley speaks to the

²⁶ In accordance with standard 13.10 of the International Mine Action Standards, on victim assistance in mine action, the term "victim" includes people killed, injured and/or impaired, their families, and communities affected by explosive ordnance. The term "survivor" is used for a direct victim who has been injured and/or impaired, but not killed as a result of an accident with explosive ordnance. The term "victim" is thus used to refer to the broader groups of victims, in line with applicable legal obligations regarding gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

²⁷ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Colombia.

²⁸ Data provided by UNICEF.

immediate and long-term needs and rights of persons living with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations, including those affected by explosive ordnance.

C. Development of mine action capacities of national and local institutions

Strengthening national and local mine action capacity

41. Despite continued challenges, including the lack of progress in security sector reform processes and unreliable funding, United Nations efforts to strengthen national and local capacities continued to deliver positive returns.

42. Twelve of the 28 countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations have national mine action legislation in place, with the Lao People's Democratic Republic adopting a decree on mine action in 2022 and Somalia having submitted legislation, pending adoption.

43. Twenty-one countries supported by the United Nations adopted national mine action standards, which enhance the quality and safety of mine action activities carried out within each respective country, including first iterations in Burkina Faso and an update to those in Armenia.

44. The United Nations provided technical assistance, training and equipment to the Directorate for Mine Action of the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency to strengthen institutional and operational capacity. In Somalia, the United Nations delivered on-the-job training to the Somali Explosive Management Authority in technical areas such as accreditation processes, quality assurance and information management.

45. Mine action capacity development efforts also supported security sector reform. In Libya, the United Nations facilitated a more coordinated response among the explosive ordnance teams of different security agencies.²⁹ Training delivered by the United Nations to the Ministry of the Interior of Iraq enabled police officers to share newly gained skills and knowledge with colleagues in different duty stations. In the Central African Republic, explosive ordnance disposal capacity-building enabled the national defence and security forces, for the first time, to undertake bulk demolitions with guidance from the United Nations.

46. Support was also provided for the development of training capabilities. In Lebanon, the national mine action authority reached a long-term agreement with the United Nations on the Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon. With support provided by the United Nations, the Sudan established a regional mine action training centre where several training courses were conducted prior to April 2023, involving national and regional entities.

47. National capacities require multifaceted approaches to address evolving threats from improvised explosive devices. In Mali, support through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) helped add 7 improvised explosive device-disposal teams within the Malian Defence and Security Forces for a total of 41, to deploy to high-risk areas and protect the civilian population.³⁰ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) supported the endorsement of national improvised explosive device standards.

²⁹ Libyan Mine Action Centre, Forensic Police in device scene incident management, National Safety Agency, Diplomatic Police, National Safety Authority operators and Military Engineers, and Air Defence.

³⁰ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Mali.

Similarly, the United Nations facilitated the development of a comprehensive national counter-improvised explosive device strategy in Burkina Faso.

48. In Iraq, the United Nations developed an innovative partnership model whereby international non-governmental organizations partner with national non-governmental organizations and provide mentoring and skills transfer in survey, clearance, explosive ordnance risk education and leadership and management training. By the end of 2022, two national non-governmental organizations were fully accredited to conduct operational activities. In Armenia, the United Nations, through UNDP, devoted particular attention to partnerships with local non-governmental organizations, in particular women's organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities, encouraging their collaboration with national authorities and facilitating the establishment of a national mine action coordination platform.

Strengthening weapons and ammunition management

49. Unsecured weapons and ammunition can be easily diverted to illicit markets and contribute to armed conflict, organized crime and terrorism. Diverted ammunition is increasingly used to assemble improvised explosive devices, while weak management of weapons and ammunition can lead to unplanned explosions.

50. Efforts to strengthen weapons and ammunition management in peace operation contexts continued. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO delivered training to the Congolese National Police to effectively manage and secure weapons and ammunition stockpiles. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) trained national defence and security forces in weapons and ammunition management and provided advice, technical assistance and logistical support, including through visits to storage facilities and advice on the revision of the national strategy and action plan.

51. To promote the safe and secure management of deployed weapons, weapons-related equipment and ammunition in peace operations, the United Nations developed a dedicated training course to improve the capacities of United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries to effectively apply the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium as well as to implement the 2019 policy on weapons and ammunition management and the 2020 United Nations Manual on Ammunition Management.

52. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research continued to provide advisory services and capacity-building on the use and application by States, the United Nations, regional organizations and other stakeholders of the Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments.³¹ Togo (2021), Guatemala (2022), El Salvador (2022), Benin (2022), Central African Republic (2022 and 2023) and Côte d'Ivoire (2023) used this tool and conducted nationally-led and -owned assessments, leading to national road maps to strengthen institutional and operational capacities, policies, practices and procedures.

53. Benchmarks related to weapons and ammunition management continued to be introduced and progress assessed under various United Nations sanctions regimes, including arms embargoes, including in the Central African Republic, Haiti, Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan. In these contexts, the United Nations supported national authorities in building capacity in weapons and ammunition management to meet relevant stipulations.

³¹ See <https://unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments>.

54. The United Nations continued to promote effective weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. These efforts led to the 2022 release of a standard operating procedure on developing mission-specific activities on the collection, handling, storage, transportation and disposal of weapons and ammunition in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration contexts.³²

55. Through the *SaferGuard* Programme, the United Nations continued to promote the application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines to enhance the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles. The Ammunition Management Advisory Team, a joint initiative established in 2019 by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, continued to provide relevant technical advice and assistance to States in assessing and strengthening capacities for safe and secure ammunition stockpiles. The United Nations also continued to build a diverse roster of ammunition management experts with knowledge and skills compatible with the Guidelines, thereby enhancing the ability to respond to requests from States for assistance.

Improving the safety and security of peacekeepers

56. In 2022, explosive ordnance incidents involving peacekeepers killed 16 and injured 72 others, representing a slight increase in fatalities and a small drop in injuries compared with 2021.³³ Evidence indicates that peacekeepers are more likely to survive attacks when adequately trained and equipped. United Nations efforts to enhance the preparedness of troop- and police-contributing countries deploying to high-threat environments focused on predeployment and in-mission training and supporting the validation of training provided by national and regional training centres.

57. The United Nations provided advice and technical support to the African Union to develop its mine action strategy and counter-improvised explosive device strategy. The counter-improvised explosive device strategy will aim to facilitate cooperation and coordination between the African Union, its member States, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, the United Nations and other partners in developing and implementing counter-improvised explosive device initiatives to address the growing improvised explosive device threat to member States of the African Union and its peace support operations.

58. In Somalia, the United Nations provided improvised explosive device threat mitigation support to troop-contributing countries deployed with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia through the provision of pre deployment and in-country training, specialized equipment, expert advice and mentoring.

D. Leveraging mine action to enhance humanitarian, peace and security and development priorities

59. As the primary forum for mine action coordination, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action continued to engage with entities from across the United Nations system on issues of strategic importance and to establish coherent approaches and common positions. Responses to the war in Ukraine were considered, as was mine action coordination in Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mali, Myanmar and the Sudan. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action continued its

³² See <https://unddr-wam.org/page/wam-in-ddr-standard-operating-procedures>.

³³ Data provided by the Improvised Explosive Device Threat Mitigation Advisory Team of the Mine Action Service.

advocacy for the universalization and full implementation of relevant treaty frameworks and for full compliance of all actors with applicable international law.

60. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action held annual commemorations on 4 April of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, involving partners from across the sector. In 2022, the event highlighted the achievements of the mine action community and celebrated the work of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, marking the thirtieth year of its founding. In 2023, the event highlighted the progress made by national authorities and partners to reduce contamination in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam over the past decades and drew attention to explosive ordnance contamination in Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen.

61. Supported by the Government of Switzerland, the United Nations convened the annual International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers in June 2022 and June 2023 in Geneva. This forum, attracting some 500 participants, provides a platform for meaningful exchange between national, regional, international and United Nations mine action partners on challenges and best practices.

United Nations humanitarian coordination

62. The Global Protection Cluster's mine action area of responsibility continued to act as a coordination mechanism at the country and global levels for United Nations humanitarian actors and civil society partners operating in high-threat environments. In December 2021, the Mine Action Service and the Danish Refugee Council, as global coordinators, launched the first mine action area of responsibility strategy.³⁴

63. In 2022, 135 partners, including 97 national organizations, coordinated their activities through the mine action area of responsibility, reaching over 10 million people across 18 humanitarian emergencies.³⁵ The global coordinators also contributed to policy guidance on nexus approaches in humanitarian settings and a joint operational framework with the Global Health Cluster. As at July 2023, the mine action area of responsibility was active in 16 emergencies, integrating mine action into 16 humanitarian response plans and coordinating activities between 188 partners, including 105 national partners. Thus far in 2023, 3.5 million people have been reached, of a target of 25 million for the year. Meeting this target is contingent on activities being fully funded.

Integration into peace and security priorities

64. The United Nations continued to promote mine action as a confidence-building measure in peace and political processes. In Colombia, the United Nations forms part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, together with the Government and former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), to gather information on areas with explosive ordnance contamination. In 2022, former FARC-EP combatants provided information to the Government on 191 possible areas of contamination to help inform the national demining plan.³⁶ Furthermore, in June 2022, Humanicemos DH, a demining organization composed of former FARC-EP combatants, started operating as an autonomous organization after four years of support from the United Nations. Since 2022, the United Nations has also provided technical support to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace – a court created pursuant to the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Government and the FARC-EP –

³⁴ See www.globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/MA_AoR_Strategy_%28English%29.pdf.

³⁵ Data provided by the global coordinators of the mine action area of responsibility.

³⁶ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in Colombia.

to design ways in which individuals subject to the jurisdiction of the court may contribute to mine action in fulfilment of individual reparatory sentences.

65. In the Sudan, before the outbreak of hostilities in April 2023, the United Nations supported humanitarian demining training of 21 former combatants from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North/Malik Agar faction as part of confidence-building measures to support the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan. Those trained joined a mine action non-governmental organization to clear contaminated areas and roads and dispose of explosive ordnance.³⁷ The mine action component of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya contributed to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, including through technical expertise provided to the Mine Action Sub-Committee of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission.

66. As a component of eight peacekeeping operations,³⁸ mine action directly contributes to the Action for Peacekeeping agenda and the Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities by protecting civilians, advancing the safety and security of peacekeepers, bolstering peacekeeper performance through weapons and ammunition management and providing technical assistance to national authorities in support of sustaining peace and advancing political processes. Mine action indicators are featured in the results frameworks of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, a mission-specific tool that enables peacekeeping operations to assess and report on progress in the implementation of Security Council mandates.

67. A working group, which is led by the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support and includes the three peacekeeping operations most affected by explosive ordnance threats,³⁹ continued to coordinate implementation of the recommendations of the independent strategic review of the United Nations response to explosive ordnance threats requested by the Security Council.⁴⁰ Implementation of the recommendations will need to be reassessed moving forward in view of the decision taken by the Security Council on 30 June 2023 to terminate the mandate of MINUSMA and initiate the withdrawal of the mission from Mali, to be completed by 31 December 2023.⁴¹

68. Given the impact of explosive ordnance contamination in Afghanistan, the Security Council, in its resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#), mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to coordinate explosive ordnance threat mitigation measures. By resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq on issues related to the clearance of landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war.

Accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

69. Mine action has been leveraged as an accelerator of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Azerbaijan, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic each adopted an eighteenth sustainable development goal at the national level related to mine action. In 2022, 19 countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations reported that mine action was included in their

³⁷ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in the Sudan.

³⁸ The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, MONUSCO, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, MINUSCA, MINUSMA, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei.

³⁹ MINUSCA, MINUSMA and MONUSCO.

⁴⁰ [S/2021/1042](#).

⁴¹ Security Council resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#).

national United Nations-supported development frameworks, compared with 15 in 2021.

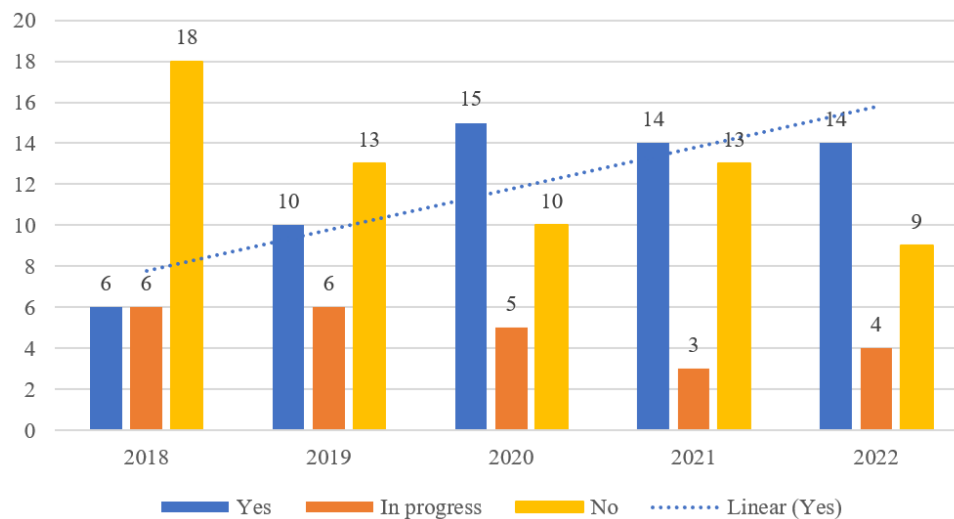
70. In 2021, UNDP and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining initiated a project entitled “Beyond Square Meters” to examine how mine action contributes to sustainable development beyond square metres and mines cleared. Case studies were conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Somalia and South Sudan. Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina showed direct contributions by mine action to 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴²

E. Addressing the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys from diverse groups, while facilitating their empowerment and inclusion

71. Progress continued to be made in the development of gender strategies in countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations. While 6 countries and territories had a gender strategy for mine action in 2018, this number increased to 14 by 2022 (see figure II).

Figure II

Number of countries and territories with national mine action gender strategies where the United Nations has active mine action operations, 2018–2022



Source: Data drawn from the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023.

72. The United Nations ensured that explosive ordnance risk education teams comprise both men and women facilitators, resulting in a significant increase in the number of women who received risk education. In Afghanistan, through a project that concluded in August 2022, the Mine Action Service was able to increase the number of women community liaison officers to maximize interaction with women and girls when assessing community needs. In Azerbaijan, a project is currently under way to train and deploy the first two all-women demining teams. The training will be completed in August 2023.

73. The United Nations actively ensures that women are represented in training and capacity development opportunities. Women were represented in, and successfully

⁴² Data provided by UNDP.

completed, training to explosive ordnance disposal level two in Burkina Faso (March 2023), the Central African Republic (May 2023) and Colombia (January 2022) and to level three in the Central African Republic (May 2022) and, for the first time, in Afghanistan (October 2022) and Iraq (June 2022). In the Sudan, prior to April 2023, United Nations training provided 28 women with the skills to join mine action organizations as deminers. This was a landmark considering that only one woman worked as a deminer in the country previously.⁴³ In Somalia, in an area of employment where women are typically absent, 22 per cent of trainees for a police mobile vehicle checkpoint project were women.⁴⁴

74. Gender parity in United Nations mine action programmes improved in 2022. The percentage of women staff rose from 30 per cent in 2021 to 36 per cent in 2022, the highest percentage since the launch of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023.⁴⁵ At the same time, an overall lack of gender parity in technical mine action positions persisted. In 2022, women constituted 14 per cent of staff engaged in survey and clearance activities and less than 10 per cent of mine action technical advisers.

IV. Observations and recommendations

75. Despite the many areas of progress indicated in this report, civilians continue to be disproportionately affected by explosive ordnance, which cause death and injury, and damage to civilian objects. This is unacceptable.

76. The use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines in hostilities continues to raise concerns about worsened contamination and remains a challenge for the full compliance with international law by the parties to these hostilities. I therefore recall that the use of weapons that are by nature indiscriminate is prohibited under international humanitarian law, and that parties to hostilities need to be mindful of their obligations arising out of the applicable legal framework.

77. I am also gravely concerned by the expanding and evolving threat of improvised explosive devices and their impact on civilians, humanitarian actors and United Nations missions and personnel. Remote-controlled, vehicle- and person-borne and victim-activated improvised explosive devices kill and maim, inhibit movement, hinder economic activity and generate a climate of fear. When such devices endanger United Nations mission personnel, mandate delivery is also threatened. I appeal to Member States to support peace operations deployed to high-threat environments, including through the provision of equipment, bilateral training in line with United Nations standards and the reinforcement of expertise within the United Nations. I welcome the ongoing focus of the Security Council on the safety and security of peacekeepers – a pillar of my Action for Peacekeeping agenda and Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities. I also welcome the independent strategic review of the United Nations response to explosive ordnance threats ([S/2021/1042](#)) and urge all relevant actors to ensure the full implementation of its recommendations. I further note the need for a closer examination of the implications that the withdrawal of MINUSMA from Mali may have on the improvised explosive device threat within the country, across the Sahel and beyond.

78. To reduce the ability of non-State armed groups and organized criminal entities to deploy improvised explosive devices, I encourage all relevant actors to pay more attention to addressing the transnational transfer of materials used to build such

⁴³ Data provided by the Mine Action Service in the Sudan.

⁴⁴ Data provided by the United Nations Office for Project Services.

⁴⁵ The gender parity rate is calculated as a percentage of women to men staff.

devices and the exchange of bomb-making expertise among perpetrators of attacks, particularly by supporting regional border control and intelligence-sharing efforts. There is also a lack of data, both in terms of contamination – as improvised explosive devices are rarely mapped by the user – and in the recording of casualty figures. I call for greater strengthening of the documentation of use and reporting on casualties.

79. Mine action has a comprehensive international legal framework. Yet significant gaps remain in the universalization of, reporting on and compliance with relevant treaties and norms. For instance, over 30 States, including major producers, stockpile holders and users, have yet to express their consent to be bound by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Furthermore, over 70 States remain outside the framework of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I therefore renew my call for all States to join all relevant treaties without delay and to comply fully with their obligations and recommit to reporting and advocacy efforts. Now is the time to refocus on ensuring the prohibition of the production, use and transfer of these insidious weapons and munitions.

80. Given the well-documented, widespread patterns of harm to civilians caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, I once again welcome the endorsement by 83 Member States of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. In my policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, I call for the implementation of the Political Declaration to strengthen the protection of civilians in populated areas in conflict zones and take combat out of such areas altogether, and to establish mechanisms to mitigate and investigate harm to civilians and ensure accountability of perpetrators.

81. My policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, launched on 20 July 2023, offers a response to the changing nature of conflict, growing inequalities and myriad of global interlinking threats. Given the enabling and responsive role of mine action – as exemplified in the present report – across the peace and security, humanitarian and development nexus, I encourage all relevant actors to draw on the best practices and innovations of this sector in order to continue positive and sustainable contributions to making humanity safer and more prosperous and to reducing the human cost of weapons.

82. I am concerned by the negative impact of extreme weather events and climate change on efforts to mitigate explosive ordnance threats. I urge the design of effective and efficient study-based responses tailored to meet the needs of communities made even more vulnerable by the climate crisis.

83. I welcome the ability to reach increasing numbers of people through in-person explosive ordnance risk education, mass messaging and use of innovative methods and tailored campaigns. I also note the advocacy efforts of the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group. I encourage Member States to foster continued progress in explosive ordnance risk education in order to improve coverage, quality and equity.

84. I welcome the appointment of Giles Duley as the first United Nations Global Advocate for persons with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations. I thank him for his advocacy to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities, including from explosive ordnance, are heard in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. Progress in identifying referral pathways has been significant, but it is not enough. I urge Member States to provide appropriate care and ensure the full and dignified reintegration of victims in society, including through the dedication of resources and enhancement of capacities. I am grateful for the work of the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group, and I encourage the creation of similar alliances of organizations to raise the profile of victim assistance interventions and

ensure that the human rights and needs of victims of explosive ordnance are more systematically met.

85. I commend and ask for continued efforts to consider gender and age diversity as well as vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities in planning and programming activities and when assessing the impact of contamination. While progress has been made, the inclusion of women, particularly in technical areas of mine action, needs to be strengthened. More opportunities also need to be provided for children and youth to participate safely and meaningfully in the design and implementation of mine action programmes targeting them.

86. Mine action continues to be a valuable confidence-building measure and reparation tool in peace processes. I reiterate the importance of explicitly incorporating mine action into cessation of hostilities, ceasefire and peace agreements, including with regard to mapping and information-sharing so that explosive ordnance can be quickly identified, marked and removed.

87. I also call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution [2365 \(2017\)](#) on mine action. Mine action must be considered and appropriately resourced at the earliest stages of mission mandate design, as missions evolve, and during transition planning. The focus on national mine action capacity-building efforts by United Nations peace operations is particularly vital, especially in transition planning, so that national capacities, supported by United Nations country teams, can continue to address residual contamination.

88. I encourage the sustained and systematic integration of weapons and ammunition management into the peace and security work of the United Nations, including when mandating peace operations. I commend the active engagement of Member States in multilateral deliberations on conventional ammunition. Recognizing the need to comprehensively address the risks of poorly managed conventional ammunition, I welcome the adoption by the open-ended working group, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/233](#), of a set of political commitments as a new global framework to address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management ([A/78/111](#)).

89. I also encourage the further strengthening of cross-sector collaboration and call for the inclusion of United Nations mine action initiatives within plans and funding proposals led by United Nations entities promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations, the respective agendas on children and armed conflict, women and peace and security, and youth and peace and security, and early recovery initiatives. I also note that mine action is integral to the work of the United Nations in helping to reinforce the leading role of Governments in identifying solutions to internal displacement, responding to crises and reducing the risks of future displacement.

90. I welcome the establishment of mine action as a key national priority by several Member States and its increased inclusion in national development frameworks. I encourage continued efforts by national authorities to leverage mine action to support and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and encourage all relevant actors to prioritize research into and further investment of resources to reinforce the contribution of mine action to the 2030 Agenda and meet the goal of leaving no one behind. Such a refocused approach would not only support local communities in rebuilding their lives, livelihoods and infrastructure after armed conflict, but would also rebuild trust and the social contract.

91. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action continues to guide United Nations responses to increasingly challenging explosive ordnance threat environments. As exemplified by the present report, the Group has delivered tangible

and measurable results in accordance with the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023. As it proceeds to finalize its next Strategy, the Group will remain committed to promoting mine action as an enabler across different sectors, incorporating best practices into its monitoring and evaluation approach, maintaining its strong people-centric focus and building on an impressive range of achievements and innovations.

92. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives in the line of duty and thank the dedicated individuals working in mine action for their tireless efforts to achieve the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of explosive ordnance. The achievements described in the present report would not have been possible without them. I conclude by reiterating that we all have a role to play in sustaining and increasing the momentum to ensure that people living under the pall of explosive ordnance – who are among some of the most vulnerable people in the world – are not left behind.
