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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
19th Meeting of the States Parties
(15 – 19 November 2021)

10. Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention
(b) Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction: Conclusions and
recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Article 5
Implementation

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva Office, UNMAS

Mr. President,¹

This statement is made on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA).²

Excellencies,

Clearance is a core obligation under this convention and is one of the priorities of the Oslo Action Plan and the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019 – 2023. Clearance means prevention. Clearance means protection.

Data collected through the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy indicates that some 164 sq km of land were returned to communities during the reporting period; 55 sq km of these were minefields - cleared with the support of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The United Nations recognizes that mine action is most sustainable and effective when it is nationally owned. To support national ownership, UNDP, in 2021, produced the Handbook on

¹ H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, and Disarmament Ambassador at-large.

² The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action consists of twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.



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Capacity Development in Mine Action, which captures the wide experience of UNDP developing capacities in mine action, including risk education. The Handbook is intended for the entire sector, including the United Nations family, national counterparts and operators on the ground.

The United Nations wishes to also stress the important effect that clearance activities have on the environment and calls on the mine action sector to adopt environmental management practices that will reduce the impact of explosive ordnance on the environment, including with respect to data collection and impact assessments.

As noted by Mine Action Review in its recently issued Policy Brief on *Mitigating the Environmental Impact of Explosive Ordnance and Land Release*, if the sector is to fulfill its humanitarian imperative to “do no harm”, then integrating environmental mitigation measures is one way to help address any long-lasting negative impact on the environment and on the communities that rely on land now and in the future. The United Nations lends its voice to call for more considerations to be taken by the sector, to the extent possible, related to the environment, and indeed, in fulfilling clearance obligations.

Excellencies,

As long as the world is not free of mines – and explosive remnants of war -, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) is an important means of prevention. In 2020, the United Nations reached some 3.5 million people through face-to-face risk education in countries and territories with a United Nations mine action presence. Many more were reached through other means, such as social media, television, radio or billboard campaigns. The adaptation of innovative remote approaches also helped minimize the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the beneficiaries reached.

In Burkina Faso, several IED risk education initiatives coordinated by the *Commission Nationale de Contrôle des Armes* (CNCA) and supported by UNMAS and UNDP targeting some 120,000 members of the population are under way while UNMAS continues to conduct risk education training sessions for national Defence and Security Forces.

In Palestine, the Palestinian Mine Action Center (PMAC) has trained community risk educators in the West Bank, supported by UNMAS, to increase the coordination of risk education initiatives. In addition, UNMAS, together with partners, conducts and coordinates Explosive Ordnance Risk Education training sessions in Gaza, for at risk communities and humanitarian actors. Sessions are customized for boys, girls, men and women.

In Syria, UNICEF & UNMAS worked jointly on explosive ordnance risk education text message campaigns in 2020 and 2021. The campaigns were implemented in collaboration with the



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Syrian government and telecommunication providers and reached everyone in Syria with a mobile SIM Card.

In Ukraine, UNICEF rolled out a digital explosive ordnance risk education campaign in 2021 and reached 400,000 children living on both sides of the contact line, showing that risk education digitalization helps to reach non-government-controlled areas.

Excellencies,

This Meeting of the States Parties is a place to discuss challenges and to celebrate our successes.

In this spirit, the United Nations would like to conclude this statement with a positive example from a very challenging environment. In Colombia, just last month, Humanicemos DH – the humanitarian demining organization of former FARC-EP members – handed over its first mine-free area in Caquetá. The cleared land was returned to an indigenous community.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Even in the midst of great challenges, the United Nations continues to implement, support and acknowledge initiatives that advance our shared clearance and risk education commitments.

Thank you.

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