

MINUTES

MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP

TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2019

UNITED STATES PERMANENT MISSION TO UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

1. WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair of the MASG, Mr Stanley L. Brown, Director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) in the US State Department, opened the meeting at 13.10 hours and welcomed the MASG members to the meeting, along with the observer organizations. He also extended a warm welcome to the Director of UNMAS, Ms Agnès Marcaillou. Mr Brown said that it had been an honour for the United States to serve as chair of the MASG for the past two years. As well as continuing to have the MASG focus on information exchange and coordinating financial resources, Mr Brown noted that a donor matrix had been produced and there had been some progress on the Article 5 project, where the MASG had discussed ways to help mine affected states meet their APMBC clearance obligations.

Mr Brown then announced that it had been agreed that Germany would assume the chair of the MASG for the next two years, i.e. 2020 and 2021 and invited Mr Wolfgang Bindseil of the German Federal Foreign Office to address the meeting. Mr Bindseil thanked the chair and expressed his appreciation for the confidence of the US and MASG members for Germany becoming chair. Mr Bindseil said that he held great respect for the work of the US over the past two years and Germany intended to continue in the same way. Mr Bindseil noted that Germany had been funding mine action since 1992 and was one of the founding signatories of the APMBC. Since 2007, Germany has consistently been in the top ten mine action donors and had funded over 56 countries. Germany recently issued a new mine action strategy for the period 2019 to 2021, which had a focus on 10 countries (but with the possibility to fund projects in non-priority countries in situations of acute need). The priorities for Germany include humanitarian needs, international commitments, national ownership, and efficiency and effectiveness. In closing, Mr Bindseil pledged to be an active chair of the MASG and he said that Germany would like to consider ways to integrate mine affected countries into the work of the MASG. He concluded by thanking all MASG members for their trust.

2. WELCOME BY UNMAS

The Chair invited Ms Marcaillou to address the meeting. Ms Marcaillou congratulated the US for their work as chair of the MASG over the past two years, and said that they had been dynamic and engaged, and that relations between the United Nations and the US were productive and pleasant. She said that the transition to Germany as chair will also be smooth, as they were used to working together. Ms Marcaillou noted that 2019 had been a special year for both positive and negative reasons. On the positive side, it has been 20 years the adoption of the APMBC and the upcoming Oslo Review conference will be important. However, 2019 had also seen the rise in new victims in

countries like Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia, mainly due to IEDs, and that there was still a lot of work to be done, both politically and operationally.

Ms Marcaillou then reminded members about the UN Portfolio of Mine Action projects. This on-line tool had been available for many years and it allowed the UN agencies to present the needs of mine affected countries. Ms Marcaillou also noted that the new UN Mine Action Strategy 2019 – 2023 had been launched this year, after broad consultation with over 300 stakeholders. UNMAS will continue to coordinate the inputs into the annual Secretary-Generals report on mine action. Finally, she noted that the biennial resolution on mine action in the 4th Committee was being coordinated by Poland (on behalf of the EU) and she encouraged member states to make statements and to ensure that mine action is not just an after-thought in the work of the United Nations.

3. COUNTRY AND THEMATIC UPDATES

3.1 Review of Past Country briefings at the MASG: The Chair explained that he thought it was an appropriate time to review whether the country briefings given at MASG meetings were useful and relevant from the donors' perspective, and should the MASG continue in this way. To assist the discussion, a handout listing all the topics from the past 10 MASG meetings was distributed.

General discussion followed. Netherlands said they highly valued the country briefs and would like them to continue. However, they preferred that there not be too many topics per meeting to allow more in-depth discussion. The Swiss commended the briefings as being consistently professional and of a high standard. However, they felt that attendees at the New York MASG meeting were more at the policy level, and in Geneva more at the country level, and that maybe the briefs could be tailored with that in mind. Australia said that they found the country briefings last year very useful, even for people working at the policy level. Sweden asked how the country topics were selected and the Chair explained that it was usually a mix of current, topical issues, along with some historical cases to highlight certain countries. He also noted that prior to all MASG meetings members are asked to provide or suggest agenda items. Ms Marcaillou added that UNMAS suggest topics to bring a sample of countries to the table that are important to the United Nations. Sometimes these may not be so obvious, like Nigeria and Burkina Faso which were on today's agenda, in order to draw attention to emerging issues. Ms Marcaillou went on to note that the MASG is a donor meeting and not a policy body or technical meeting, and that the meeting was a good opportunity for donors to be informed about the United Nations practical needs. It was the prerogative of MASG members who they choose to send to a donor level meeting.

3.2 Afghanistan: A power point presentation on the current situation in Afghanistan was given by Mr Patrick Fruchet, the UNMAS Programme Manager in Afghanistan, and Mr Hugues Laurence, the UNICEF Child Protection Specialist. Mr Fruchet started with a map showing which groups controlled what territory in Afghanistan. He noted that through delicate negotiations based on urgent humanitarian needs, the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) was able to have teams work in all areas – Government controlled or influenced, insurgency controlled and contested areas. The sad news was the rise in civilian mine and ERW casualties in recent years – up from 36 casualties per month in 2012 to 191 per month in 2017. He noted that over 10,000 Afghans have been killed each year for the past six years, and about 15 % of these were due to mines, ERW and victim

activated IEDs. He also noted that very few casualties are caused by legacy mines laid prior to 2001. Mr Fruchet went on to explain that the national mine action authority (DMAC) assumed full responsibility for coordinating mine action in 2018. In addition, UNMAS and the NGO partners have been effective in negotiating with the Taliban to enable mine action operators gain access to difficult areas. DMAC is a relatively strong entity compared with other comparable agencies in Afghanistan. Mr Fruchet noted that there had recently been a renewed emphasis on victim assistance. Finally Mr Fruchet said that the first all-female demining team had been working in Bamyán Province and also that Bamyán Province was the first province in Afghanistan to be cleared of all known minefields.

Mr Laurence explained that UNICEF treated the rise in casualties of victim operated devices as an 'epidemic' and both UNICEF and UNMAS took a public health approach to dealing with it. UNMAS recently conducted a complete review of all risk education approaches used over the past 20 years, and concluded that the approach should move from raising awareness among the population to changing their behaviour. UNICEF will be assisting in implementing new risk education approaches in Afghanistan through 300 UNICEF-supported 'child-friendly spaces', 17,000 schools and potentially 6,000 community-based education facilities and temporary learning centres.

In question time, the Swiss asked about reporting by Afghanistan of casualties caused by victim operated IEDs (VOIEDs) under their APMBC Article 5 obligations. Mr Fruchet said that when Afghanistan joined the APMBC in 2002, VOIEDs were not an issue, but with the rise in new casualties, it was agreed in 2017 that VOIEDs would be included in Article 5 reporting. However, accurate reporting difficult as there is still fighting going on in many parts of the country. The United Nations has had discussions with the Taliban on these issues, but it is delicate given that many IEDs are still active weapons and suggesting clearance is a difficult balance. However, the Taliban do agree that victim operated devices are indiscriminate.

Australia liked the 'epidemic' approach and asked why there were a disproportionately high number of men and boys as new victims. Mr Laurence said that globally 84% of child casualties are boys, and in Afghanistan up to 90% of all ERW accidents are children. On the public health approach, Mr Laurence said that in Afghanistan there were 9,000 polio workers going door-to-door, and this is a network UNICEF could tap into (like they have done in Syria). Dr Rutherford of CISR asked what the goal of the VA campaign was, and how could DMAC and UNMAS assist, eg referrals, case files and advocacy. Mr Heslop of UNMAS said that a similar situation existed in countries like Libya and Somalia, where the majority of victims were young men who did not respond to traditional risk education messages. He said that there had been some success with programmes in certain cultural situations, where it was found that boys and young men responded better to pressure from their mothers and grandmothers to change their behaviour.

3.3 Burkina Faso: The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burkina Faso, Ms Metsi Makhetha joined the meeting via video link from Ouagadougou. Ms Makhetha started by saying that despite some promising opportunities with a new government in 2016, the security situation in Burkina Faso was now deteriorating. In 2018, there were 2,000 security incidents, of which 22 were IEDs. By mid-2019 there had already been 30 IED incidents. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, along with United Nation activities are being impacted by deteriorating security. The epi-centre is in the Central-North, Sahel and Northern provinces. UNMAS had conducted a rapid assessment in 2018 and noted the similarities of the IED situation with neighbouring countries, such as Mali and Niger.

Ms Makhetha said that half a million people had been displaced last year, and the United Nations was supporting assistance programmes in five countries, focussed on the security and development nexus. She commended all actors trying to help improve security. The UNMAS plan is multi-faceted and will focus on affected populations, support actors to deal with IEDs and strengthen institutions. Ms Makhetha said that mine action will provide a tangible response to vulnerable populations, but that programme was not fully financed. Ms Marcaillou reinforced this point by saying that Burkina Faso deserves attention. The region is vulnerable and the UN SG is looking at cross-border solutions.

Belgium asked if any lessons from Mali or Niger could be applied in Burkina Faso. Ms Makhetha said that over the years the Government and United Nations have drawn on lessons and techniques from Mali, with an emphasis on the urgency of prevention. Some techniques and procedures in place are adequate, but the threat is becoming increasingly technical and additional assistance is needed. Mr Heslop of UNMAS said that while it was clear the insurgents in the region are sharing their experience of making IEDs, through their various country programmes, UNMAS is in a position to see what trends are emerging and then develop processes and procedures to counter them. He noted that money spent in prevention is much more effective than millions of dollars being required for clearance. Dr Rutherford from CISR noted that Burkina Faso was the 40th signatory to the APMBC, which brought the Ottawa Convention into force, and as such they held a special place in the life of the Convention. Finally, the Chair thanked Ms Makhetha for her presentation.

3.4 Iraq: Mr Solomon Black, the Iraq CWD Program Manager at PM/WRA gave a presentation on the situation in Iraq. Mr Black started by saying that before ISIS, more than 2.35 billion square meters of Iraq were contaminated by or suspected to be contaminated by explosive hazards from conflicts prior to 2014. Since 2014, an additional 2.3 billion square meters of Iraq is now confirmed or suspected of containing explosive hazards. While pre-2014 contamination comprised landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), new contamination includes a significant number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). ISIS mass produced IEDs and munitions on a scale never before done by a non-state actor, and many employed advanced technology.

Since 2015, donor-funded humanitarian survey and clearance operations have been implemented by a wide range of international and local companies and NGOs in areas liberated from ISIS. In addition to traditional mine action NGOs and contractors, several government of Iraq entities have also been involved in ERW clearance operations including military EOD units and militias. The national coordinating body, the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) has made significant progress since 2015 when NGOs and contractors began working in liberated areas and they are now playing the role of a traditional mine action center. Mr Black said that the sector had made significant progress since 2015, but much work still needs to be done. He referred to progress figures on his power point slide.

Mr Black said that the challenges that remain include; identifying and addressing the scale of ISIS contamination, better coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces conducting clearance operations, the limited QA/QC capacity within DMA, fluid priorities and the inability of operators to use explosives. Mr Black encouraged donors to;

- Continue to support critical demining operations and prioritize flexible strategic relationships with a wide range of operators
- Stipulate that operators build local capacity as part of assistance

- Push DMA to take ownership of QA/QC
- Encourage government of Iraq to articulate regional priorities so donors know where the greatest needs are and update these priorities annually
- Encourage Iraqi Security Forces to play a larger role in mine action
- Advocate the government of Iraq to reverse the 2014 rule banning operators from using explosives
- Encourage Baghdad to make a financial contribution to humanitarian demining operations

The Chair thanked Mr Black for his presentation and a copy of the full presentation will be distributed with the minutes.

4. HMA AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF THE PROTECTION CLUSTER

Mr William Chemaly, the Global Protection Cluster Coordinator, UNHCR and Ms Christelle Loupforest, Global Coordinator, Mine Action Area of Responsibility, UNMAS, joined the meeting via video link from Geneva. Mr Chemaly started by saying that protection focuses on a number of areas, such as; saving lives, reducing the impact of war, protecting the rights of people, and finding solutions and helping people move forward to finding normality. He noted that mine action was a cross-cutting issue and that there are 17 Protection operations around the world where mine action is currently needed. Mr Chemaly finished by saying that this year the Protection Cluster has 17 operations involving 88 organizations in total, with a budget of US\$207 million.

Ms Loupforest went on to explain that the mine action Area of Responsibility (AoR) in the Protection Cluster is coordinated at the global level by UNMAS and an NGO co-lead (Humanity and Inclusion – HI). She said that The Mine Action AoR contributes analysis and coordinates the mine action response when Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) is developed by UN country teams. In the new 2020 templates for the HRPs, a dedicated space is reserved for mine action. Ms Loupforest reiterated that mine action at present incorporated into 17 HRPs and they coordinate about 70 mine action-related organizations. Of the mine action funding needs of US\$170 million, only 48% has been met this year. Ms Loupforest then gave some examples of the work coordinated by the mine action AoR in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria. Finally Ms Loupforest outlined some immediate funding needs for the mine action AoR, which are contained in the power point presentation attached to the minutes.

In question time, a U.S. Mission Representative asked if the mine action sector had considered looking at public-private partnerships, and she felt that the MASG and the United Nations were the place for the private sector to get advice. The Chair noted that this issue had been raised in the MASG in the past and that it would continue to be considered. Ms Marcaillou agreed that the opportunities for public-private partnerships should be explored, even at the country level. This would involve not just money, but also logistics, new technology, etc. Ambassador Toscano (GICHD) said that it was excellent that mine action had become an integral part of the Protection Cluster and hoped mine action may find a place in other clusters. He noted that mine action is an ‘enabler’ and he would welcome discussion about mine action involvement in other clusters. Ms Marcaillou responded by saying that UNMAS were reviewing to role of mine action in Protection and also looking at expanding into other clusters. She stressed that when UN assessments see the need for mine action, the UN respond with one voice and gave the example of UNISOM, where all agencies had requested UNMAS support with coordination, training, resources etc. Ms Marcaillou said that

the inclusion of the mine action template into the HRP was a great example of the UN system recognizing the need to include mine action at the planning stage.

5. UNDP

Mr Bruno Lemarquis, the Deputy Director of the UNDP Crisis Bureau updated the meeting on recent developments and the work of UNDP in mine action. He said that UNDP first became involved with mine action in Cambodia in 1993, and since then they have supported over 50 countries with capacity development, coordination, technical assistance, training, equipment and resource mobilization. UNDP works closely with national authorities, as well as UNMAS, UNICEF, GICHD and NGOs. He said that in 2014, UNDP announced that mine action was no longer a 'global offer'. This decision was reversed in early 2015, based on the demand from programme countries and UNDP Country Offices. But unfortunately, it had led to some confusion among partners. Since then a number of new policy documents, such as Agenda 2030, the SDGs, UN Strategy on Mine Action 2019-2023, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 and some internal documents have been issued, which have helped to clarify the situation.

Mr Lemarquis went on to explain that within UNDP headquarters, the Crisis Bureau had recently been re-established to focus on conflict prevention, rule of law, humanitarian response, and mine action, and that the Bureau can provide an integrated offer of support. In the context of this latest reorganization at UNDP, the work on mine action is now housed at the re-established Crisis Bureau.

In May this year, the Crisis Bureau commissioned an independent review which strongly recommended that UNDP remain fully engaged and scale-up its work on mine action, particularly with partners and development actors. Mr Lemarquis said that they would continue to support affected governments with 1) capacity development and governance to help manage mine action with focus on advocacy, clearance, land release, land utilization for development, etc, and 2) integrating mine clearance and victim assistance into recovery, peacebuilding and long-term development in crisis and post-crisis settings.

In conclusion, Mr Lemarquis said that the aim of UNDP was to double the number of programme countries from 10 up to 20, and to strengthen their capacity and partnerships with the IACG-MA, UNMAS, the GICHD and other partners. UNDP will attend the APMBC Review Conference in Oslo in November at a senior level. Finally, Mr Lemarquis pledged to work closely with the MASG and requested their support to assist UNDP fully re-engage and scale up its mine action support to countries.

6. UPDATES FROM MASG OBSERVERS

5.1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD): The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano, started by introducing Mr Valon Kumnova, who has just been appointed as the Chief, Mine Action Programmes at the GICHD (replacing Mr Guy Rhodes). On the topic of Iraq, Ambassador Toscano informed the meeting that he had recently visited Baghdad and Erbil, and the need for strengthened national capacity was apparent. The GICHD has offered to

assist the Government of Iraq to develop mine action legislation, develop a national mine action strategy, and to assist with national standards, particularly with respect to IEDs.

Ambassador Toscano distributed a handout, which contained an update of the work of the GICHD, and then he spoke about one project – a new GICHD activity to strengthen explosive ordnance risk education. Ambassador Toscano noted that after a steady decrease in victim numbers from accidents with explosive ordnance over a 15-year period from 1999, there has been a sharp increase in victim numbers since 2013. The upturn in these global figures are heavily influenced by casualty numbers in the Middle East. The GICHD has engaged over the past year in extensive discussions with partners regarding the state of risk education and what the sector needs to do to reverse this upward trend in victims.

Ambassador Toscano went on to say that it is in this context that over a dozen UN agencies and international NGOs have come together to form an Explosive Ordnance Risk Advisory Group (EORE AG) with the purpose of raising the global profile of risk education and identifying ways of improving its effectiveness, efficiency, and integration into other sectors. Launched in May 2019, the EORE AG is co-chaired by UNICEF and a rotating NGO representative – currently MAG – and the GICHD serves as its secretariat in addition to being a core member. The Centre will also help implement the groups' workplan by taking the lead on certain activities.

In question time, Germany asked how the group will implement this new approach in affected countries. Ambassador Toscano said that it would be through inclusion in national strategies, sharing of best practices, dissemination of results back to the field, and reviewing the relevant IMAS. Ms Marcaillou stated that the risk education materials UNMAS deliver are specific to weapon type, community practice, gender, and cultural norms. This approach is needed as not one size fits all, and all approaches should be approved by the host country.

5.2 ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF): The Director of the ITF, Ambassador Lovrencic, outlined a number of points. One was the importance of permanent donor engagement and looking at ways to make the group grow. The ITF is trying to encourage other states in Europe to fund mine action. He welcomed that news that Qatar was funding risk education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. His second point was on the need for local donor engagement and coordination, and to engage actively with the receiving country. The third and final point was the need for advocacy and to be forward looking. He said the MASG should look at opportunities to advocate for mine action, similar to say Prince Harry in Angola or Daniel Craig for the UN.

5.3 Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR)/James Madison University: The Director of CISR, Dr Ken Rutherford made the following points:

1. A Senior Manager's Course, sponsored by WRA, focusing on the management of Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) programs took place from 16 September to 4 October at JMU in Harrisonburg, VA. The training goal was to strengthen CWD efforts in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, Laos, Libya, Niger, Solomon Islands, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, and Vietnam, and sought ways to integrate the latest thinking in the field of business management with the practical experience of people actively working in the field of CWD.

2. *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction* sponsored by WRA

- a. 24th year of publication. The current issue (available in the back of the room) focuses on the Middle East and critical issues, including excellent articles from UNMAS on IEDs and Urban Clearance, and GICHD on key performance indicators in HMA.
 - b. In the past three issues, *The Journal* has featured 54 different contributors from 27 different organizations
 - c. The Journal has received 26 article proposals for our upcoming November issue. We can only accommodate upwards of 15 articles, but we are excited to witness the increasing interest in this publication.
 - d. *The Journal* subscription base continues to grow, now reaching more than 2,500 subscribers in over 160 countries.
 - e. *The Journal* is the forum for the HMA and CWD community to present and share information on pertinent issues, practices, case studies, and new technologies to our community, in addition to acting as a historical resource for the community of practice.
3. The Global CWD Repository launched one and half years ago in Geneva, is a free online document storage and sharing tool for the CWD community housing current and historical documentation related to lessons learned, best practices, success stories and challenges, in a centralized location.
 - a. The Repository is publicly accessible and accepts all material—regardless of government, organization and region of origin—related to CWD and humanitarian mine action.
 - b. Contributing organizations and individuals retain copyright of material posted on the global CWD repository. Documents receive a static URL that will never change.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Next meeting: The Chair noted that, in consultation with the incoming German chair, that the next MASG meeting would be held in Geneva in the margins of the 23rd National Directors Meeting (NDM-UN), which is to be held from 11 to 14 February 2020. The exact date and time of the MASG meeting will be advised.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair invited UNMAS to give some closing remarks. Mr Paul Heslop noted that countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan still face huge challenges. He thanked the donors for their ongoing commitment and support to UNMAS in particular and mine action in general. He encouraged donors to visit the field whenever possible to see the work at first hand. He realized for donors the MASG was just one of many meetings, but for UNMAS it was the one chance per year to get their message across to 30 donors. Ms Marcaillou reinforced the point that UNMAS provides a range of services, including field programmes, coordination in Geneva, policy issues and reporting, and that

back office work needed funding as well. Finally, Ms Marcaillou thanked the Chair for the meeting and for the attention and commitment that the US has given to the MASG.

In his closing remarks, Mr Brown thanked all members and observers for their participation in the meeting. He encouraged all members and observers to provide ideas and inputs to the next MASG meeting and wished Germany all the best for assuming the chair on 1 January 2020.

8. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair closed the meeting at 15.45 hours.

As at 19 November 2019