

MINUTES

MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

2 APRIL 2014, GENEVA

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Takashi OKADA welcomed all participants to the meeting. He explained that it was his great pleasure to become the chair of the MASG, together with his counterpart Ambassador Kazuyoshi UMEMOTO, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Japan to the United Nations in New York. The Chair appreciated the active participation in the group by all members and observers. The agenda for the meeting and list of attendees is attached.

The Chair thanked the outgoing chair, Australia, for providing a thorough briefing at the time of the transfer of the chairmanship. He also thanked the United States for the provision of funds to cover the cost of the MASG secretariat for another year, and announced that Mr Ian Mansfield had resumed the functions of the secretariat.

The Chair noted that while the total amount of resources to mine action is fairly stable on a global scale, the contribution to the United Nations VTF has been decreasing in recent years. As far as Japan was concerned they thought that not only bilateral channels, but also assistance through UN mechanisms was an important approach. To this end, the Chair welcomed the Netherlands initiative in proposing a sub-group to support the VTF which was to be discussed later in the meeting.

With regard to membership of the MASG, the Chair noted that some countries were listed in the Landmine Monitor report 2013 as being donors to mine action but that they were not members of the MASG. The Chair suggested that Andorra, Brazil, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Oman and South Korea be invited to join the MASG. There were no objections to this proposal so the Chair undertook to write to these countries in due course and invite them to join the MASG.

The Chair referred to a draft paper that had been distributed by Japan titled 'Future Work of MASG 2014'. The paper had been prepared in Tokyo as a guideline for priorities and topics to be dealt with by the MASG during Japan's chairmanship. He explained that the list was not exhaustive and he welcomed inputs from members for any additional topics or suggestions for the paper. The Chair also explained that Japan originally announced that it would chair the MASG for one year i.e. 2014. However, if the meeting was agreeable, Japan was open to extending its term to two years in line with previous chairs. There was no objection to this proposal. The chair also asked members to already start thinking about volunteering to be the next chair.

Finally, the Chair mentioned some upcoming events in observance of the International day for Mine Awareness on 4 April 2014 in both New York and Geneva.

2. REMARKS FROM THE GICHD

The Chair welcomed the new Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano and invited him to address the meeting.

Ambassador Toscano said that the GICHD was pleased to continue to host the MASG meeting whenever it was held in Geneva and to provide the necessary logistic support. He then outlined some key aspects of the current work of the GICHD. They included;

- The release of a new version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), which included a functionality for victim assistance
- Work on environmental aspects of mine action and the application of the principle of 'do no harm'.
- Work on UXO in the Pacific, including on sunken ships
- Consideration of dealing with underwater munitions
- The importance of the linguistic programmes of the GICHD, which now includes French, Russian, Arabic and Farsi.

Ambassador Toscano also mentioned that the current GICHD strategy will finish at the end of 2014 and that consultation with partners and contextual analysis had already started, with a view to developing a new strategy by the end of the year. He said that he would welcome input and advice from MASG members.

3. REPORT FROM THE LAST MASG MEETING IN NEW YORK (18 OCTOBER 2013)

The Secretariat gave a brief summary of the key points of the MASG meeting held in New York on 18 October 2013. The minutes of that meeting had been distributed to members for comment shortly after the meeting and then the final version had been posted on the MASG website. There were no comments on the minutes.

4. DRAFT TORs FOR SUB-GROUP ON UN VTF FOR MINE ACTION

The Chair invited the representative of the Netherlands to speak to this item. Ms van der Post reported on the preparatory meeting held the day before to discuss some draft Terms of Reference for a sub-group to support the UN VTF. As a result of that meeting the draft TORs had been revised and a new version had been distributed (dated 01/04/2014).

On the 'mechanics' of the sub-group it had been suggested that it would meet in the margins of the MASG meeting twice per year, make use of the existing chair and secretariat arrangements as well as the MASG distribution list (or a smaller list if appropriate).

On the substantive issues the draft TORs had been revised to include the following topics;

- Criteria for allocating unearmarked funds provided through the VTF
- Donor support to improving efficiency and transparency of the VTF
- Demonstrating value for money
- Requirements for an increase in annual funding to the VTF and the principles of good donorship

The Netherlands realized that the new draft would need to be considered by MASG members so suggested a two week period for comments. After that they would revise the TOR, redistribute them and apply the principle of 'silence means agreement'.

A number of members spoke stating that they felt that the revised TORs provided a clearer focus for the sub-group but they would need time to study them. It was also agreed that as an informal body the MASG could not, and did not want to try and change the UN financial rules regarding trust funds. Some members felt that with increased transparency the VTF may attract more multi-year and unearmarked contributions, and that this should be the aim of the sub-group. Others saw the VTF as one avenue for funding, but not the only option.

The Director of UNMAS thanked the Netherlands for their work and said that the revised TORs were clearer. The Director said that she would need to check with the UN Office of Legal Affairs and the Financial Controller before making any further comment. However, she hoped such a group would enhance coherence among donors and the UN system. A fact sheet on the VTF had been prepared and distributed to the meeting and if useful this would be posted on the website.

The Chair summarized by saying that he felt there was consensus on establishing the sub-group and he proposed that the MASG proceed along the lines suggested by the Netherlands, that is allowing two weeks for comment on the latest draft TOR (dated 01/04/2014) and then issuing a revised set of TORs for agreement. The Chair thanked the Netherlands for their leadership and work on the issue.

5. MASG INPUT TO THE 3rd REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE APMBC IN MAPUTO

The Chair noted that the 3rd Review Conference to the APMBC is to be held in Maputo in June this year. A suggestion had been made that the MASG may wish to make a formal statement at the meeting outlining some key points of common interest, such as the need for further acceleration of mine clearance, enhanced regional cooperation and greater ownership by affected countries.

A wide ranging discussion followed where a consensus emerged that as an informal body it would not be appropriate for the MASG to make a formal statement at the Review Conference. However, it was agreed that the MASG may wish to come up with a list of common, general points or key messages that members could include in their national statements and/or refer to the role of the MASG in donor support for mine action.

The Director UNMAS said that MASG members may also wish to mention the role of the United Nations (as outlined in the last UN General Assembly Resolution 2013) in their statements at Maputo. She noted that the work of the United Nations had not been mentioned in the documentation coming out of the 2nd Review Conference to the APMBC.

The Chair summarized the discussion by noting that the idea of a MASG statement at the 3rd Review Conference was not supported by the meeting. However, there was support for the MASG producing a list of common ideas or key messages and making this available to members to include in their national statements. The Chair would arrange the development of this list through the Secretariat.

6. UPDATE FROM MASG MEMBERS

Due to the short time available for this meeting MASG members had been requested to provide written updates. Statements were received from Australia, Japan and the United States. These will be posted on the MASG website along with the minutes.

7. UPDATE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION GROUP – MINE ACTION

The Director of UNMAS read a short statement updating the meeting on recent UN mine action activities. A copy of the statement will be posted on the website along with the minutes

8. UPDATE FROM MASG OBSERVERS

Again, the MASG observers (GICHD, OAS, JMU/CISR and ITF) were invited to submit written updates.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 MASG Secretariat workplan and Budget. The Secretariat presented a draft workplan and budget covering the proposed work of the Secretariat during 2014. The workplan was agreed and the Chair again thanked the US for their funding support for the work of the Secretariat

9.2 Date for the next MASG meeting. The Chair stated that the next MASG meeting would be held in New York sometime in September or October. The Director UNMAS reminded the meeting that the GA Resolution on Mine Action was now on a biennial basis so there would not be a resolution in 2014. The Chair said he would consult with the Japanese Mission in New York about a date, but asked members to provide suggestions.

9.3 US Mine Action Strategy. The representative of the USA said that they would distribute a two page summary of their current mine action strategy.

9.4 Mine Action Training. The representative of James Madison University / CISR advised the meeting that they were working on a project to transition their senior mine action management training courses to a regional setting.

9.5. UNDP Update. The representative of UNDP thanked the MASG members for their support of UNDP mine action efforts, which amounted to US\$50 million in 25 countries. He said UNDP was currently reviewing their mine action work and that they would be reducing their mine action staff level at headquarters and placing more focus on the country office level.

MEETING CLOSE

The Chair thanked all members for their valuable inputs and the GICHD for arranging the venue. The meeting closed at 14.00 hours.

Final

22 April 2014