



## United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

**Seventeenth Annual Conference of High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II on mines, booby-traps and other devices to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

### **Statement on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Geneva, 11 November 2015**

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

Mr. Coordinator,

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

The United Nations thanks you and the Co-Coordinator for your report on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), as well as for the recommendations therein. They will contribute to enhancing the continued dialogue and cooperation among High Contracting Parties in this domain.

While the use of improvised explosive devices is not a new phenomenon, these devices are having an unprecedented impact on the United Nations, which is increasingly called to intervene in violent environments where there is no formal peace agreement or even peace to keep.

In targeting humanitarian workers, IEDs affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as the safe return of refugees and displaced populations. By preventing peacekeepers from fulfilling tasks mandated by the Security Council, IEDs seriously undermine the operational effectiveness of United Nations interventions. Moreover, IEDs that remain undetonated in urban or rural areas deny access to vital infrastructure and hinder reconstruction efforts after conflict.

On two recent occasions, the General Assembly has expressed its concerns over the impact of IEDs. When adopting, without a vote, the draft resolution<sup>2</sup> on “Assistance in Mine Action” on 16 October, its Fourth Committee recognized for the first time, “the humanitarian threat posed by improvised explosive devices following conflict”.

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

<sup>2</sup> A/C.4/70/L.8



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Likewise, on 6 November, when adopting, without a vote, a draft resolution entitled “Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices” the General Assembly First Committee underlined the impact of IEDs on the security and stability of States, as well as on the ability of the United Nations to deliver on its mandates.

The CCW, and in particular its Group of Experts on IEDs, has proved to be a useful forum to raise awareness and facilitate discussions among Member States on how best to address this threat. It is worth mentioning, among other issues, the discussion on the Australia-led Global IED Partnership trial with its related database to which UNMAS was a major contributor<sup>3</sup>, and the questionnaire aiming at strengthening national capacities through the establishment of a network of national points of contact.

The United Nations has constantly supported the work of the Group of Experts, including by sharing its experience and expertise, and it remains available to do so in the future. It commends the work done by the Coordinator and Co-coordinator, and supports further work on the IED issue within this framework.

The United Nations is increasingly proactive and structured in organizing a coherent response to the IED threat, not only to deliver its mandates effectively, especially those aimed at protecting communities, but also because the safety and security of its personnel are critical priorities. The United Nations strives to mitigate the threat posed by IEDs.

In addition, the United Nations underlines that its activities are strictly compliant with the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. They are central to establishing and maintaining access to populations affected by the IED threat.

Mr. Coordinator,

I would like now to add just a few words, in my capacity as Director of UNMAS, on some of its specific work on IED-related issues in the humanitarian context.

UNMAS mitigates the threat posed by IEDs and does not carry out any counter-IED activity per se. It mitigates the threat to United Nations personnel, uniformed and civilians alike, by providing them with training, advice, mentoring and, at times, equipment. UNMAS intervenes at the request of those who need assistance. It also supports States in mitigating the threat posed by IEDs to civilians, in particular through victim assistance and risk education, oftentimes with UNICEF and other United Nations entities.

In Syria, at the request of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, UNMAS contributes to the emergency humanitarian response by supporting and coordinating the work of local and international non-governmental organizations to reduce the impact of explosive hazards on the civilian population.

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<sup>3</sup> UNMAS provided information on 494 incidents



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In Iraq, at the request of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMAS has recently initiated a humanitarian impact assessment on the threat of IEDs and ERW in newly retaken areas. In so doing, UNMAS works in partnership with national authorities to conduct an assessment of existing capacities to respond to this newly identified threat, with the aim of providing technical training, mentoring and operational support where needed.

As mentioned yesterday at the very informative side event organized by France and UNIDIR on “Improvised Explosive Devices: Options for strengthening the international response,” UNMAS is looking at a “whole of system” approach to mitigate the threat of IEDs. At the policy level, UNMAS has been entrusted with elaborating IED guidelines for peacekeeping and political missions personnel, both uniformed and civilians. UNMAS is also finalizing a lexicon in support of the guidelines aiming at developing a common solid knowledge base on IEDs.

As a follow up to the statement that was made by our Australian and Interpol colleagues, UNMAS, in its role as the coordinator for mine action within the United Nations system, is following-up on the working group on United Nations activities. It will conduct this work in close cooperation with UNIDIR, building on the findings of its recent initiatives and study on IEDs.

We would like to reiterate our commitment to further assist all High Contracting Parties, affected countries in particular, upon request, on such issues.

Thank you.