MINUTES

MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP

THURSDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2018

UNITED STATES PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA

1. WELCOME

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 15.15 hours and welcomed all participants. Mr Brown started by thanking Italy for their work as chair of the MASG over the previous two years. He then invited the two keynote speakers to address the meeting – Ambassador Robert A. Wood, the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary General UN DPKO and Chair of the Inter-Agency Group – Mine Action (IACG-MA) at the Principals level in New York.

1.1 Ambassador Robert A. Wood (USA). Ambassador Wood congratulated Mr Brown on his assumption of the chair of the MASG. He noted that the MASG serves a very important role in the international donor community and he was pleased to see that the US was chairing it again. Ambassador Wood said that the US could not do it alone and that they need the help of partners, be they like-minded states, civil society or the United Nations. Ambassador Wood stressed that it was more important than ever to engage in dialogue and constructive cooperation, even though it often takes a long time to see results. This was one reason why the engagement this week at the NDM-UN remains vital to the ongoing work of the international community in the field of conventional arms.

Ambassador Wood pointed out that whether we are discussing weapons destruction and stockpile reduction, clearance of landmines and IEDs, or trying to negotiate language in various multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation fora, the goals are the same. We need to work together as member states, civil society, and international organizations. Indeed the humanitarian mine action community serves as a model for how different actors, whether governmental or non-governmental, can work together toward a common end. Ambassador Wood concluded by thanking the MASG members for the hard work they were doing to promote international peace and security.

1.2 Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix. Mr Lacroix delivered a statement to the meeting via a recorded video message. He started by giving his apologies for not being able to attend in person, and he also congratulated the USA on assuming the chair of the MASG. Mr Lacroix stated that with conflicts raging around the world, the threats posed by explosive hazards perpetuate humanitarian crises and hinder emergency responses and effective peace operations – thus mine action is needed more than ever. In the face of these global challenges, the responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States could not be greater. Mr Lacroix noted that the MASG serves as the only platform for the United Nations and the donor community to come together to ensure a coordinated response towards a world free from the threat of mines and other explosive hazards. He urged MASG members to continue to use this forum to identify resource requirements and share experiences and knowledge towards solving the gravest challenges of our times.

Mr Lacroix expressed his sincere gratitude for the continued commitment of the governments of MASG members to support the mine action activities of the United Nations and stressed that financial assistance and political commitment is needed more than ever. While the amounts of money required may seem significant, they are a fragment of the daily cost of war and the suffering experienced by the populations in these countries. Mr Lacroix concluded by echoing the appeal of the Secretary-General to keep mine action at the top of the international agenda and to ensure that resources are allocated accordingly. He assured the MASG that they can be certain that the United Nations will be a responsible steward of their precious resources, and he reaffirmed the United Nations commitment to a culture of accountability, transparency, and results-driven delivery.

A copy of the video message from Mr Lacroix can be found on the MASG website.

1.3. Mr Stanley L. Brown – MASG Chair. Mr Brown thanked both the keynote speakers and outlined the agenda for the meeting. He noted that the US has an active CWD programme and that they have contributed significant resources over the years. In 2017 the US had programmes in more than 47 countries and since 1993 have provided more than 2.9 billion dollars in assistance to over 100 countries. While this is a lot of money, global needs continue to outstrip available resources. This was one of the reasons why the US was willing to chair the MASG again.

Mr Brown went on to say that by continuing to strengthen dialogue, we can target MASG members' respective resources strategically to address the oldest and newest concerns facing the mine action community today. By donors using the same language and terminology to describe the issues at hand and increasing the exchange of information, the MASG can reduce the duplication of programmatic activity, cover more ground and complement one anothers efforts. Mr Brown also noted that while the Landmine Monitor had seen an increase in donor contributions over the last two years, unfortunately the number of new civilian casualties was increasing. Mr Brown had just returned from a high level meeting in Kuwait about Iraq and Syria, and he said that the foreign ministers of all countries involved mentioned the threat from Explosive Remnants of War as a major impediment to recovery.

2. COUNTRY AND THEMATIC UPDATES

2.1. Statement by Director UNMAS. Ms Agnès Marcaillou, the Director of UNMAS, speaking on behalf of the IACG-MA, joined the meeting via a video link from New York. Ms Marcaillou thanked Italy for their past tenure as chair of the MASG and by congratulated the US for assuming the chair. She noted that that the United Nations and the US had been long time partners and she looked forward to constructive and action-oriented meetings. Ms Marcaillou noted that in these troubled times mine action is, increasingly, an essential pre-requisite to life saving emergency responses, to allow the safe return of displaced populations, to stabilization and reconstruction. Ms Marcaillou stressed that mine action is an essential post-conflict requirement and that the role of the United Nations is recognized as being significant in this regard.

Ms Marcaillou underscored Mr Lacroix's message that the MASG is the only global platform for the United Nations to hold interactive and transparent exchanges with a wide array of donors on mine

action. She added that the MASG is an opportunity to bring the 'realities' of mine action in the field to donors in New York or Geneva. The IACG-MA briefings are conducted in close coordination with the Chair and the donors, and complement the Mine Action Portfolio. Ms Marcaillou highlighted the country-specific MASG meeting held in Sudan last year as a good example as a way to keep the needs of the mine action community high on the governments' agenda, and also as a way of increasing donor confidence. The United Nations supported the efforts by the chair to broaden the membership of the MASG and increase the geographic diversity.

On the issue of funding, Ms Marcaillou encouraged greater donor coordination to reduce overlap. She also thanked the donors for their political and financial support to the UN VTF (and recognized Germany as the largest contributor in 2017). She drew the attention of the meeting to paragraph 4 (c) of GA Resolution 72/75 adopted two months ago which 'urged all, in particular those that have the capacity to do so, to provide reliable, predictable, timely, and where possible, multi-annual contributions to mine action capabilities' and recognized the Netherlands and Denmark in this regard. In conclusion, Ms Marcaillou said that with the collective support of the MASG, under the leadership of the United States, she was confident that the United Nations will be further empowered to assist States and populations affected by the deadly legacy of conflicts.

A copy of the statement by the Director UNMAS is available on the MASG website.

2.2 Syria. The UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura, delivered a statement to the meeting via a recorded video message. Mr de Mistura said that while there had been a reduction in the level of violence in some areas of Syria, these areas were heavily contaminated by ERW. It is estimated that 8.2 million people are living in ERW contaminated areas. He said that UNMAS have been asked to move into Syria and he hoped that a mine action assessment mission would be undertaken soon. Mr de Mistura said that much needed to be done and he urged donors to provide the maximum and political support to UNMAS to enable them to do their work. When asked about the assessment mission, Mr Giles Delecourt from UNMAS said that at present UNMAS was only based outside the country and what operations they were able to mount, were not covering 60% of the country. UNMAS is currently negotiating to get access throughout Syria and set up a long term presence.

A copy of the video message from Mr de Mistura can be found on the MASG website.

2.3 Iraq. Mr Pehr Lodhammar, the UNMAS Iraq Programme Manager gave an update on the current mine and ERW situation in Iraq, particularly in Mosul. Mr Lodhammar said that the vision of the United Nations was to 'enable recovery and stabilization, thus enabling safe return' and the strategy was to provide explosive hazard management response, deliver risk education and enhance the governments capacity to manage, coordinate and regulate the explosive hazard management response. In November 2017, the relevant UN agencies agreed on a coordinated response to the situation in Mosul and since then explosive ordnance disposal teams have commenced work in the city. A wide variety of different types of explosive devices and huge numbers of explosive devices have been found. The challenges ahead include the sheer number of explosive items to be dealt with, unsecured stockpiles, possible chemical weapons, access to areas and lack of funding. The Iraqi governments Department of Mine Action (DMA) has developed a National Strategic Plan covering 2017 to 2021, and at the 16th MSP of the APMBC in Vienna, Iraq was granted an Article 5 extension until 1 February 2028. In response to a question, Mr Lodhammar said that there was good

cooperation between the DMA and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Authority (IKMAA) operating in the north of the country, and UNMAS supported both bodies. The full presentation on Iraq is available on the MASG website.

2.4 Yemen. Mr Stephen Bryant, the UNDP Chief Technical Adviser, spoke about the situation in Yemen. He said that following three years of civil war the country basically ceased to exist, and showed a map where the country was divided between Government, Houthi and Al Qaeda controlled areas. Over 22 million people were assessed to be in need of support, with some 11 million in acute need. Within the country there are numerous 'legacy' and 'low priority' minefields left over from previous conflicts, along with new threats from large numbers of improvised landmines, UXO, AXO and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The number of new victims from ERW is increasing quickly. The Yemen Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) is still continuing to function in a limited area of the country and is clearing some ordnance. The full presentation on Yemen is on the MASG website.

2.5 Lake Chad Basin. The situation in the Lake Chad Basin was described by Mr Hugues Laurenge from UNICEF and Mr Paul Heslop from UNMAS. Mr Laurenge explained that the Lake Chad basin included provinces from four countries – Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Over 17 million people live in the region, most are in need and 3.2 million are IDPs. The ERW contamination in the region is assessed to be high, but not well documented. Mr Laurenge provided a table showing civilian Mine/ERW and 'Person-Borne IED' (PBIED) fatal casualties in Nigeria to be nearly 1,000 in 2017. Only a small percentage of victims are from mines or ERW, with the majority caused by suicide bombings, or PBIEDs, however it is anticipated that once peace is restored and freedom of movement increases, a significant increase of mine/ERW incidents can be expected. The United Nations is undertaking risk education and marking activities in the region where possible. Mr Heslop explained that UNMAS undertook an assessment mission to the region in 2017 but does not have any operations in the area. In response to a question on coordination, Mr Laurenge said that Niger and Chad have a national mine action body, but Nigeria and Cameroon do not. In Nigeria, humanitarian agencies have established with local authorities coordination mechanisms at the district (Local Government Areas) and State levels, and the UN IACG-MA, INGOs and the ICRC are active in the Northeast. A copy of the Lake Chad Basin presentation, along with two UNMAS project proposals for Cameroon and Nigeria are on the MASG website.

2.6 Burma/Myanmar. Mr Hugues Laurenge from UNICEF explained that there was armed conflict currently going on in four different areas of Burma/Myanmar, and that 9 out of the 14 states were contaminated with mines and ERW. In 2017 there were 176 casualties reported. The United Nations undertook an assessment mission in 2012 and since that time a Mine Risk Working Group supported by UNICEF has been established. This group meets quarterly and is the only mine action coordination mechanism in the country. It has been effective at building trust among different ethnic armed groups. Mine action is taking off slowly and some advocacy, MRE and survey work has been undertaken, along with some VA activities. Increasing use of mobile technology is being used for MRE. Apart limited non-technical surveys, no land release or clearance work is currently being undertaken. Full details of the presentation are on the MASG website.

2.7 IED Disposal Standards. The Director of UNMAS provided an update on the development of the UN IED Disposal (IEDD) standards. Ms Marcaillou said that the need to develop IEDD standards for

the UN had been driven by the situation in places like Mosul, where the need to create humanitarian space was being hampered by the presence of IEDs. Until now there have been no standards to guide IED disposal operations under the auspices of the United Nations, whether in the context of peacekeeping or humanitarian activities, as IMAS has yet to be updated to cover IEDs. The process to develop the UN IEDD standards has been undertaken by a working group comprised by national experts from 12 Member States, co-chaired by Belgium and China and coordinated by UNMAS. UNMAS has facilitated information seminars and WebEx meetings to interested Member States and other involved stakeholders. The version of the UN IEDD standards of 30 November 2017 has been revised to reflect comments and feedback submitted during the second round of consultations and has now gone forward within the UN system for approval. Ms Marcaillou noted that in October 2016, the IMAS Review Board had identified the need to review IMAS for their applicability to IEDD situations. It was now up to the IMAS Review Board to get on with this work. As chair of IMAS, UNMAS will be responsible for consistently ensuring that both the UN IEDD standards and IMAS would complement each other.

In response to a question about further consultation and clarification with regard to the concerns of some MASG members regarding the scope and applicability of the UN IEDD standards, Ms Marcaillou said that there were no further consultations planned. The document was into the approval process stage and Member States would get the document once approved. She clarified that the standards are not intended for those who feel that they do not apply to their funding situations. The goal is that when the UN hires clearance operators in places like Mosul, the people deployed will have a clear set of operating standards and are not placed in harms way. When asked about the timeline for the approval of the UN IEDD standards, Ms Marcaillou said that the document would follow the normal internal UN procedures and would need to be signed off at the Principals' level. A question was asked about when IMAS or the IEDD standards would be applied. Ms Marcaillou said that in the interim (until the IMAS review is complete) they would look at each situation in a context specific way.

2.8 UN Mine Action Strategy. Ms Marcaillou reminded the meeting that the current UN Mine Action Strategy covers the period 2013 – 2018. A review of the current strategy has already commenced in order to inform the development of a new strategy. The IACG-MA will conduct an open and inclusive process (as was the case in 2012 to develop the current Strategy) to elaborate the new Strategy. It is not anticipated that the new Strategy will significantly differ from the previous one. UNMAS will consult widely – although the end result will be a UN strategy. Monitoring and evaluation will continue to be a core pillar of the Strategy, as will emphasis on gender, women and youth. The new Strategy is planned to be presented to the IACG-MA Principals for endorsement in the third quarter of 2018.

When asked about the inclusion of dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse in the new strategy, Ms Marcaillou said that she would consult with partners on the issue. As UNMAS is part of the Secretariat, it is mandatory to follow UN rules and regulations covering these issues. In that context, Ms Marcaillou said that the UN 'Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes' would be reviewed and revised this year. When asked about the 'attribution' of change in the M & E component of the strategy, Ms Marcaillou said that she wanted to refine the indicators for measuring results and hoped to better measure the contribution of each UN agency. The M & E system would be designed to ensure that if results are not being achieved, changes can be made mid-course. Finally, Ms

Marcaillou noted that it was important to realize that achieving impact in affected countries depends partly on the impacted country itself.

2.9 Mine Action in Unstable Areas – GICHD. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano spoke about mine action in unstable areas. He noted that this issue was topical and significant because the nature of conflict was evolving – it was no longer linear and there was less formal peace. Instead we are seeing cycles of violence, armed groups being driven back then re-appearing and the absence of legitimate governments. The key points for mine action were;

- The opening of space in conflict areas for mine action operators relied on trust and a people focussed approach (not weapons focussed).
- Mine action operators need to navigate the potential tensions between the national and local levels, and to match the needs of both.
- Much experience has already been gained in this area and donors appear increasingly to acknowledge it.
- Mine action has the potential to serve other agendas, such as providing confidence building and enabling the achievement of SDGs.

The question was raised how to reconcile humanitarian principles with stabilization –the latter which is political and involves recognizing various governmental actors. Ambassador Toscano said that this was an important question with no clear answer at this stage, but that it involved complex questions on legal, operational and other aspects.

Finally, Ambassador Toscano mentioned that the GICHD would be hosting a workshop for donors and implementing partners working in Afghanistan in Geneva from 9 – 11 April 2018. The GICHD would also be hosting the 5th annual Mine Action Donor Seminar in Geneva from 24 – 26 April 2018.

3. UPDATES FROM MASG MEMBER STATES

3.1 United Kingdom. In April 2017 the UK had announced the tripling of their funding for mine action to GBP100 million over three years. This new pledge builds on the existing programme and adds a number of new target countries. Invitations for tender for these new funds will be issued in early 2018.

3.2 Germany. In 2017 Germany provided EUR30 million for 30 projects in 14 countries, covering clearance, survey, MRE, VA, advocacy and capacity building. In addition EUR45 million was provided for stabilization activities in Iraq, Syria and Libya – bringing the total contribution to EUR75 million. The current mine action strategy was developed in 2015 and will be reviewed and updated in 2018. Germany will review the priority countries and also continue to increase multi-year funding contributions.

3.3 Italy. Italy is still in the process of finalizing its mine action allocations for 2018, and the final amount available is expected to be confirmed soon. It is expected that the 2017 projects will continue, and Italy is also looking at Libya and Syria.

3.4 Canada. Canada advocated for a gender-sensitive approach to mine action, and reaffirmed that mine action can empower women. It is important that all reporting, including to the MASG by the United Nations and civil society organizations, as well as evaluations, include data disaggregated by sex and age in order to gauge the impact of funding and projects. Canada enquired as to the absence of the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) which had attended the MASG as an observer in 2017, and asked about the MASG policy regarding the inclusion of other mine action NGOs in its meetings.

3.5 Sweden. Sweden has recently approved a new 4-year programme on Mine Action covering 13 countries with a budget of approximately US$35 million for 2018 - 2021, which is an increase for the first time in many years. Sweden welcomed the proposed review of the UN 'Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes' and noted that any extra costs for gender sensitive programming may need to be added into funding proposals.

3.6 USA. The USA explained that their Conventional Weapons Disposal (CWD) programming included both humanitarian mine action and SALW. The recent requests to congress for CWD funding are the highest levels ever, with $197 million requested for 2018 and $198.5 million for 2019. The focus of the US remains with Iraq, Syria, Colombia, SE Asia and it is considering expanding through Africa and Central America.

3.7 Japan. Japan provides funding for mine action through its peace and security framework. Last financial year Japan provided US$40.7 million to 37 countries. The priority has been conflict countries and Cambodia.

3.8 Switzerland. In 2017, in the framework of its Mine Action Strategy 2016-2019, Switzerland deployed some CHF 22.3 million to efforts to clear mines, raise awareness, strengthen local capacities, and facilitate the implementation of existing conventions at the international level. To implement the strategy the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) adopt a whole-of-government approach.

3.9 France. Ambassador Marek stated that France was providing mine action support to some of the 'hottest' countries in the world, with 77% of French assistance going to Syria and Iraq. Ambassador Marek then raised the suggestion that the MASG establish a coordination process to focus on some relatively less affected countries in order to be able to declare more regularly that a country is free of mines. He noted the success of countries like Mozambique and Algeria in declaring themselves landmine free. Some other MASG members welcomed the idea and quoted Sénégal, Mauritania, Niger and Sri Lanka as possible mine affected countries that could benefit from this approach.

3.10 Australia. Ms Tanya Parkin said that Australia has some central funds for mine action, and this money is used to support organizations like UNMAS, GICHD and the Conventions. The rest of the mine action funding from Australia comes from 'country desks' with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Australia has maintained long term support for Cambodia and is currently providing $2 million per year. Australia is also supporting Colombia and has allocated $11 million over three years for Iraq (through UNMAS

4. UPDATES FROM MASG OBSERVERS

4.1 JMU/CISR. Dr Ken Rutherford, the Director of the Centre for Stabilization and International Recovery (CISR) at James Madison University gave an update on new document storage and sharing tool that they have recently developed. The Global CWD Repository is intended to serve as the central information archives for the global humanitarian mine action and CWD communities. The Repository provides unlimited, free, online cloud storage and file sharing for all organizations. Further details on the Repository can be found at www.jmu.edu/cisr/research/cwd-repository.shtml

4.2 OAS. Mr Carl Case, the General Coordinator for Mine Action within the OAS gave a brief update on their work. He said that in the past the OAS had supported ten OAS states with mine action projects. However, since 2013 the sole focus has been on Colombia. Since 2015 the OAS has become more involved and now supports ten civilian and two military mine action organizations. The OAS focusses on external quality management, evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance.

4.3 ITF. The Director of the ITF, Ambassador Tomaz Lovrencic, noted that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the ITF. While the ITF was initially established as a regional organization within SE Europe, it now works globally in 17 countries funding clearance, MRE, victim rehabilitation as well as other conventional weapons destruction activities. The ITF maintains strong links with its partners and the 2018 ITF Portfolio of Projects presents the partnership projects in 24 countries. Ambassador Lovrencic offered the support of the ITF should the MASG decide to conduct a field visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina at any time.

4.4 GICHD. The Director of the GICHD, Ambassador Stefano Toscano provided an update on two upcoming activities. The GICHD would be hosting a workshop in Geneva from 9 – 11 April 2018 for donors and implementing partners working in Afghanistan. This workshop is held with the support of the US PM/WRA and it will be the fourth year in a row that it has been held. Ambassador Toscano noted that many of the challenges identified at the 2017 workshop have been followed up during the year. The GICHD would also be hosting the 5th annual Mine Action Donor Seminar in Geneva from 24 – 26 April 2018. This will be the 5th such seminar and it aims to promote information sharing and discussion among donors.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Next Meeting of the MASG. The Chair advised that the next meeting of the MASG will be held in New York during the week of the 1st Committee meeting in October 2018. Mr Brown then said he had taken on board the suggestions for the MASG to perhaps hold another short meeting during the middle of the year. He said he would discuss this with colleagues and advise MASG members accordingly. Mr Brown said he also noted the suggestion by one member to invite the major demining NGOs to some of the MASG meetings.

6. MEETING CLOSE

In closing the Chair invited the Director UNMAS to say some final remarks. Ms Marcaillou thanked all the MASG members for their ongoing support for the work of the United Nations in mine action and looked forward in the future to coordinated and coherent meetings.

Mr Brown thanked all members for attending and also thanked the presenters of the various topics. He finished by stating that the goal of the MASG will be to focus on mine action in the field and to help civil society to recover from conflict.

The meeting closed at 18.00 hours.

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