



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction

Oslo, Norway

27 November 2019

Statement under Agenda Item 7(c): Clearing mined areas

Mr. President,¹

It is my pleasure to deliver the following statement on behalf of the 12 members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action.²

Humanitarian clearance, namely contamination surveys, marking, fencing off, removal, and destruction, is the only means to definitively eliminate the threat to people and communities. Under the leadership of UNMAS, the updating of IMAS and the elaboration of IED specific ones are a guarantee of safety and effectiveness. That the UN is the depository and custodian of these standards has proven to be

¹ H.E. Hans Brattskar, Ambassador of Norway to the UN in Geneva.

² The United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes are: 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.



instrumental to the sector, whether humanitarian mine action or peacekeepers deployed in asymmetric environments.

Clearance is a core obligation for States Parties and one of the priorities of the Oslo Action Plan. It is an important component of “prevention” and “protection”, and one of the strategic objectives of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023.

Over the past five years, with your financial support and close cooperation of host countries, the UN has cleared and destroyed hundreds of thousands of landmines and other explosive ordnance.

Since the entry into force of the Convention, States Parties have come a long way in their clearance efforts. Thirty-one formerly contaminated States Parties have declared their countries free of all known anti-personnel mines.³ Others are making progress in reaching their clearance goals, thereby working towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. In South Sudan and the Sudan, many square kilometers were released in 2018, and most importantly contributing to conditions conducive to dialogue and peace, accelerating SDGs on good health and wellbeing, quality education and clean water and sanitation.⁴

Yet, the United Nations, remains concerned about the status of Article 5 implementation. Thirty-two States Parties remain contaminated still have

³ Assistance in Mine Action, Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2019, UN Doc. A/74/288, para. 11.

⁴ Ibid, para. 30.



obligations under Article 5, 27 of which have been granted extended deadlines for clearing mined areas. This is unsatisfactory and calls for renewed attention.

Insufficient reporting and knowledge of the extent of contamination contributes to insufficient allocation of resources. Strong engagement of affected countries to comply with their legal obligations to clear new and legacy contamination facilitates the provision of adequate support from other States Parties. A number of countries are close to meeting their clearance deadlines; for instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 140,000 square meters of land were released to communities in 2018; with adequate engagement and external support, the country can meet its 2021 deadline.

New contamination, in particular by improvised explosive devices which function as anti-personnel mines, is a challenge in countries like Afghanistan or Iraq. The number of casualties has increased in the last five years; it is a major obstacle to protection, access and returns of displaced populations. The urbanization of warfare adds to the complexity, cost and length of related clearance operations and constitutes another important challenge. The mine action sector had to adopt new approaches, elaborate new international standards, and acquire new skill sets and equipment.

This is why, to prevent accidents, protect and save lives, States Parties must dedicate significant attention to gathering contamination information and



establishing injury surveillance systems. This approach enables explosive ordnance risk education to be tailored specifically to affected areas, explosive ordnance, gender and age. Between 2014 and 2018, UNMAS delivered risk education to more than 12 million people in seventeen countries and territories. In 2018 alone, UNICEF provided training in risk education to more than 10,000 professionals and reached four million boys and girls with risk education in twenty States, the majority in Yemen, Syria, Ukraine and Iraq. The UNICEF-led explosive ordnance risk education online forum, a platform for sharing good practices and technical guidance, grew to 300 members from more than 60 countries. In addition, UN and NGO experts are collaborating to devise innovative ways to improve the integration and effectiveness of risk education in the framework of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility.

Il est essentiel d'intégrer les perspectives de genre dans tous les piliers constitutifs de la lutte anti-mines. L'ONU lance un appel à tous les Etats parties de ne pas considérer cette question comme une case à cocher en remplissant un formulaire de demande de fonds ; c'est une question d'humanité, de droits humains, sans laquelle les programmes et budgets dédiés à la lutte anti-mines sont condamnés à l'inefficacité. The UN gender guidelines in mine action that UNMAS makes available this week is a critical tool to the sector.

In closing, the UN commands the Norwegian Presidency for selecting risk education and victim assistance as a main priority for the Review Conference. We call on all States Parties to follow suit.

Thank you.