



United Nations Mine Action Service

Nineteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II on mines, booby-traps and other devices

Statement on agenda item 10 – Improvised Explosive Devices (21 November 2017)

Madam President¹,

I am delivering the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

A surge in the quantity and complexity of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used in today's conflicts has led to a marked rise in casualties amongst civilian populations, United Nations peacekeeping personnel, and humanitarian responders. UNMAS, coordinator of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster, has witnessed the impact of these indiscriminate weapons in affected communities, and echoes the growing concern of humanitarian actors.

The United Nations General Assembly, in the resolution adopted in the First Committee on “Countering the threat posed by IEDs”², expresses “profound concern at the indiscriminate use and effects of IEDs, including the increasing humanitarian impact of such attacks on civilian populations”.

The issue of IEDs was also prevalent in deliberations of the Fourth Committee. The resolution adopted on “Assistance in mine action”³, which identifies UNMAS as the coordinator for mine action within the United Nations system, for the first time specifically notes that for “the purposes of the implementation of the resolution, improvised explosive devices meeting the definition of mines, booby traps or other devices fall under the scope of mine action when their clearance is undertaken for humanitarian purposes and in areas where major active hostilities have ceased”.

¹ Ambassador Beatriz Londono Soto of Colombia

² A.C.1/72/L.15/Rev.1

³ A/C.4/72/L.12



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In terms of normative frameworks, Amended Protocol II remains the only legally-binding instrument which explicitly addresses IEDs. UNMAS values the key role that the CCW plays in providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and information among states and other actors on IEDs. UNMAS strongly supports the efforts of the Group of Experts led by the Co - Coordinators from France and Colombia to address the humanitarian impact posed by these deadly devices.

In addition, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is an appropriate and useful framework for prohibiting the use of, and pursuing the clearance of, IEDs that meet the definition of a landmine.

Protocol V of the CCW also plays a role in providing useful guidance on the clearance of explosive remnants of war, which if not properly disposed of, can be used as explosive precursor materiel to manufacture IEDs.

UNMAS encourages the use of these instruments of International Humanitarian Law, and the established definitions therein, to frame the IED conversation.

Madam President,

IEDs are unpredictable in nature; there are no manufacturing standards. Those who produce IEDs continuously alter the characteristics, the functioning or the delivery method of the device. Appropriately trained, qualified and equipped operators are critical to the safe conduct of IED clearance, whether they are troops deployed in a United Nations peacekeeping mission, or a commercial entity or non-governmental organization contracted by the United Nations to carry out clearance in support of stabilization and/or humanitarian mandates.



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In this respect, UNMAS has strengthened the policy framework under which the United Nations addresses IEDs through several initiatives which respond to the needs of civilians and uniformed peacekeepers that operate in IED threat environments. UNMAS coordinated the development of the DPKO/DFS Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings, advised the Office of Military Affairs in DPKO on the development of a Handbook on IED Threat Mitigation and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Manual, and has also produced the IED Lexicon which provides a coherent conceptual framework and operational vocabulary.

Currently, as we have discussed in a number of fora, UNMAS is coordinating the development of United Nations IED Disposal Standards with inputs from national experts and UN partners, under the co-chairmanship of Belgium and China. This process benefits from a year of wide consultations with practitioners from the sector and the UN as well as States members of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping.

Madam President,

Mindful of the importance to avoid duplication and ensure coherence, UNMAS who chairs the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) Review Board, has initiated discussions with members of the Board to consider the place of IEDD Standards within IMAS and the broader mine action framework. We look forward to the continuation of constructive dialogue and a positive outcome. This process will ensure that there is no duplication with IEDD standards. It is also important to manage their complementarity. The lives of deminers are indeed at stake.

In closing, UNMAS continues to advocate strongly for the universalization of APII and States Parties compliance with its legal provisions.

Thank you.