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United Nations Mine Action Service

2022 Protocol V Meeting of Experts on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

(22 July 2022)

Statement under agenda item 5.2 – Victim Assistance

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva Office, UNMAS

Mr. President,¹

As this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you for your work and success as President-designate of the 16th Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

UNMAS commends and supports your Presidency as well as the efforts of the two coordinators on Clearance and Technical Assistance and Victim Assistance, from Pakistan and Austria.

Mr. President,

Through the United Nations Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanism for 2021, over 12,000 mine/ERW casualties were reported in 30 countries with a United Nations mine action presence. The highest casualties were recorded in Syria, followed by Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Civilians continue to be the most affected by explosive ordnance with the percentage of civilian casualties increasing from 61% out of the total number of casualties in 2020 to an alarming 81% in 2021.

Distinguished Delegates,

UNMAS continues its engagement in Victim Assistance: supporting the goal of “leaving no one behind”, strengthening the support to survivors, and consistently advocating for victims’ inclusion in education and employment and for the accessibility of public services to ensure equal and full participation in social and economic life.

¹ H. E. Ambassador Ignacio Sanchez de Lerin, Spanish Permanent Mission in Geneva, President-designate of the 16th Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.



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In Afghanistan, through the advocacy efforts of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility, which UNMAS is the Global Coordinator of, victim assistance activities were included in the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided USD 760,000 to UNMAS Afghanistan in 2021 to provide physical rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as disability awareness sessions and communication materials.

In Iraq, UNMAS advocates through the Mine Action Area of Responsibility to develop an integrated data collection system and to assist the victims of explosive ordnance. In March 2022, UNMAS and other relevant United Nations entities, ministries, humanitarian mine action organizations and survivor organizations participated in a three-day workshop to draft the Iraqi victim assistance National Mine Action Standard (NMAS).

In Mali, in 2021, 127 survivors of explosive hazards and Small Arms and Light Weapons benefitted, alongside other persons with disabilities and indirect victims of explosive ordnance, from improved access to adequate physical rehabilitation, economic, and social support services – provided both through direct implementation and referrals.

In Somalia, UNMAS closely coordinates with the Somalia Explosive Management Authority and the National Disability Agency to ensure that survivors are incorporated into national disability policies. In 2021, UNMAS supported the development of a victim assistance policy, action planning and national standards to address the needs of explosive ordnance survivors.

Distinguished Delegates,

To prevent people from becoming victims, explosive ordnance risk education is of high importance. However, challenges are still many. In Afghanistan, access to affected areas comes with an elevated risk for individuals due to massive scales of contamination. This creates an increased need for EORE resources and EORE messages tailored to the needs of the communities living in conflict affected



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areas. In Iraq, at-risk communities continue to lack the necessary knowledge on safe behaviours, particularly in areas where surveys and clearance activities have not been implemented.

Mr. President,

UNMAS continues to focus on ensuring that persons with disabilities attend EORE sessions in the communities and that their active participation is facilitated. This is the case in Mali, where a referral system is in place to enable EO survivors and victims identified during EORE activities to benefit from the diverse victim assistance activities funded by UNMAS. In Somalia, where records of casualty data indicate that children are the main victims of ERW-related accidents, risk education messages target children to balance the effect of the hazards. In addition, UNMAS has recently developed and implemented a solar-powered audio messaging device that has the potential to support persons with limited mobility to receive the messages.

Distinguished Delegates,

Victim assistance is a core pillar of mine action. One of the main challenges to implement it remains underfunding. The harm caused by explosive remnants of war challenges the delivery of core priorities of the United Nations, from effective humanitarian responses to sustainable development and sustaining peace. Mine action continues to act as a critical enabler and must therefore remain a priority.

UNMAS stands ready to continue supporting victim assistance efforts and calls on High Contracting Parties to implement the legal obligations under this Protocol including sharing accurate and reliable information, prioritizing disaggregated data collection, and assisting affected States. States that have not joined Protocol V to the CCW yet are urged to do so.

Thank you.

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