



## Statement

### On the occasion of the High-Level Pledging Event to Support the Humanitarian Response in the Horn of Africa Wednesday, 24 May 2023, 9:30 – 12:00 EDT

UNMAS joins Member States, the UN Secretary-General and others in urging for the scaling up of humanitarian assistance to address the unprecedented needs in the Horn of Africa. Mine action activities provide critical life-saving and life-sustaining support for communities. Therefore, UNMAS calls for urgent attention to address explosive ordnance threats.

In **Somalia**, UNMAS notes with grave concern the serious threat posed by the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (IED) poses to the civilian population, including displaced populations. From April 2021 – March 2023, 2,120 civilian casualties from IED incidents in Somalia were recorded, including 681 fatalities and 1,439 injured. During this time, while assessed to be the target of only four percent of devices, civilians accounted for over 54% of all IED-related casualties recorded.

Until recently, civilian casualties from IEDs primarily impacted Mogadishu. However, since early 2022 there has been an increase in the use of high-impact devices in regional urban centers and a resulting rise in civilian casualties outside of Mogadishu. Simultaneously, civilian casualties sustained from IEDs emplaced along routes has also increased in recent years.

Regarding **Ethiopia**, UNMAS expresses concern over reports of significant new explosive ordnance contamination in northern Ethiopia following the Tigray conflict from November 2020 to November 2022. Based on field assessments, as well as secondary conflict data, UNMAS estimates 78 conflict-affected districts to have potential explosive ordnance contamination in northern Ethiopia. Explosive ordnance incidents in 2022 indicate approximately 200 victims in eight woredas in Tigray alone, over 60% of which were children.

UNMAS stresses that mine action activities in northern Ethiopia are a vital first step in the delivery of assistance, the protection of civilians and the stabilisation of the region. The rehabilitation of northern Ethiopia, including the reconstruction of infrastructure and improvement of living conditions, cannot happen without an effective mechanism to clear explosive ordnance hazards.

***UNMAS urges aid organizations and governments to prioritize mine action support to the Horn of Africa to enable recovery and return strategies and, furthermore, stresses the urgent need to provide life-saving explosive ordnance risk education to the most vulnerable populations and to clear explosive ordnance contamination.***

***A rapid and efficient mine action intervention is the first step to creating safe access, enabling reconstruction, and ensuring normalization of day-to-day life.***

**For more information please contact:**

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