



**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**  
**2017 Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

**Statement under General Exchange of Views**  
**(22-24 November)**

Mr. Chairperson<sup>1</sup>,

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action comprising the United Nations entities<sup>2</sup> involved in mine action.

Excellences, dear colleagues,

In 2016, Afghanistan experienced the highest number of civilian casualties caused by ERW since 2009. Children comprise 84% of the casualties.<sup>3</sup>

From January 2015 to August 2017, civilians in Syria faced an average of 158 airstrikes, bombardments, and explosions per day: more than 6 per hour, 1 every ten minutes. While the scope of contamination cannot be fully known until technical teams have full access to the affected areas, there have been almost 150,000 explosive incidents during that period<sup>4</sup>.

Sadly, Afghanistan and Syria are only two examples among many conflicts in which civilians continue to be exposed to unacceptable harm and essential infrastructures heavily impacted. In addition to civilian deaths and injuries, populations remain at grave risk of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Matthew Rowland of United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

<sup>2</sup> 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 Peacekeeping 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.

<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan Annual report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2016, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2017

<sup>4</sup> UNMAS Programme Syria Response, 2017



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Humanitarian mine action including clearance, risk education, victim assistance, injury surveillance, and advocacy is crucial in protecting civilians from the devastating threats posed by ERW.

Protocol V provides a comprehensive framework to protect civilians from ERW, in particular Article 4 on the recording, retaining and transmission of information on the use and abandonment of ERW, and Article 5 on other precautions for the protection of the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects from the risks and effects of ERW. We welcome this year's focus under Protocol V on sharing lessons from the practical implementation of Article 4, a key provision with great potential to facilitate tailored response. Its effective implementation requires armed forces to implement and train their personnel on these procedures before they find themselves engaged in a conflict.

The United Nations urges States and other parties who are currently, or have been engaged in armed conflict to deposit with the United Nations or other appropriate third party, or the party in control of the contaminated territory, information on the type and quantity of explosives used, as well as on targeted locations.

The United Nations welcomes the decision to have the issue of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM) on the CCW agenda of work. For the last fifteen years, the United Nations has repeatedly called upon High Contracting Parties to reduce the impact of MOTAPM on civilians. Last August, UNMAS, UNODA and GICHD co-organized a meeting on the lasting humanitarian impact of MOTAPM.

The United Nations continues to advocate for further regulations under CCW to make MOTAPM more easily detectable, equipped with self-destruction or self-neutralization mechanisms, and develop safety and security stockpile measures to prevent their diversion.



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Today in post-conflict settings, civilians represent 87% of the casualties from MOTAPM<sup>5</sup>. Excellences, after fifteen years of dialogue, it is now time for action.

The United Nations also commends the continuing work undertaken by the Amended Protocol II Group of Experts in shaping a response to the growing challenge of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Discussions within this framework in support of the General Assembly resolution “Countering the threats posed by improvised explosive devices” are welcome and an important means of ensuring complementary efforts across forums.

We must synergize all efforts to tackle the harm caused by IEDs. The recent study of the Action on Armed Violence shows that between 2011 and 2016, civilians represented 81% of casualties of the 109,000 deaths and injuries from IEDs recorded.<sup>6</sup>

Often deployed in volatile and violent environments, the United Nations staff has been among the multitude of civilians impacted by the IEDs threat. The General Assembly has expressed serious concern over the harm caused by IEDs to United Nations staff, including peacekeepers, and to humanitarian workers.<sup>7</sup>

In Iraq, a shocking number of IEDs, including complex ones, have been found in areas formerly under Da’esh control, hidden in people’s homes, schools and hospitals, placed along highways and bridges, as well as at water stations and sewage plants. The threat in every single one of the 23 cities newly liberated is significant, preventing the return of refugees and internally displaced people, hindering the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance, and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of essential infrastructure. UNMAS is providing specialized search and clearance capacity to remove explosive hazards and has coordinated an emergency

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<sup>5</sup> Global Mapping and Analysis of Anti-Vehicle Mine Incidents in 2016, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2017

<sup>6</sup> Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Monitor 2017, Action on Armed Violence, October 2017

<sup>7</sup> United Nations General Assembly, First Committee, Resolution 71/72, 5 December 2016



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explosive hazard management response. In doing so, it is enabling the humanitarian response as prioritized by the Humanitarian Country Team, and the stabilization plan as prioritized by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations.

Mr. Chairperson,

In June, the United Nations Security Council adopted the first stand-alone Resolution on Mine Action<sup>8</sup>, calling on parties to end the indiscriminate use of explosives devices in violation of international humanitarian law. The United Nations urges States who have not yet done so to adhere to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, and congratulates Afghanistan and Lebanon in becoming High Contracting Parties.

The Security Council Resolution further highlights the positive contribution of mine action in sustaining peace and stability. Indeed, grounded in IHL and Human Rights Law, Mine Action advances security, freedom of movement, and the right of victims, and thus enables socio-economic conditions conducive to sustainable peace and stabilization.

In the context of urbanization of war, and the rise in civilian casualties, the United Nations calls on High Contracting Parties to urgently provide the resources needed to improve the lives of survivors and victims of mines and ERW. In Afghanistan and Somalia, two countries with the highest rates of child casualties, proposals to conduct countrywide surveys to assess the needs of survivors and services available did not receive financial support. It is our common responsibility to assist victims and affected communities.

Thank you.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2365, 30 June 2017