

Agenda Item 10(b)

Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction

Statement by MAG

Check against delivery.

Thank you, Mr President,

as a humanitarian disarmament organisation active in mine action in more than twenty countries, MAG is glad to provide some reflections on this agenda item. This Convention was the first instrument that has been aiming to ban a type of indiscriminate weapon and addressing its harmful effects on people and communities in any circumstances, according to the principles of humanitarian disarmament. The importance of the APMBC for the humanitarian disarmament field requires us to reflect and understand how the Convention's norms and principles can be applied to some pressing recurring issues and some new challenges.

As outlined in your paper, anti-personnel landmines of an improvised nature are one of those challenges. We are glad to see that the paper firmly includes improvised landmines within the scope of the Convention, clearly making them targets of the APMBC's obligations. We are glad to see that disaggregation of data by type of landmine or other explosive remnant of war is recommended: in fact, efforts in data disaggregation make clearance and land release easier and more effective.

As also recognised in your paper, the inclusion of improvised landmines within the scope of the Convention should be followed by concrete actions to support those states that are addressing the specific issues posed by this type of landmines, in particular states that have been discovering new contamination for the first time and states that, despite having declared completion, find previously unknown contamination.

For those states, as well as for other states parties, it is important to develop sustainable national capacity that allows them to tackle new or previously unknown contamination and maintain that capacity even after completion, remaining ready to address possible residual risk.

In fact, new forms of contamination, especially those involving improvised landmines are showing how mine action needs to remain dynamic and flexible enough to respond to sudden needs on the ground and be an effective element of broader humanitarian action.

In many situations, including during armed conflicts or where access is difficult, the delivering of risk education is the fastest, most important, and sometimes sole intervention to abide by the humanitarian imperative that animates this Convention.

MAG staff in the field have been witnessing how critical is gathering information about contamination in different ways, including through non-technical survey, risk education activities, and remote contamination baseline assessment, for which MAG has a specific methodology, to inform humanitarian response and guarantee the safety of displaced people and humanitarian operators. In fact, community liaison activities, including those in partnership with local NGOs, as

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well as those involving digital risk education, are critical to address the risk posed by all types of landmines, and funds for stand-alone community liaison activities should always be considered.

Mr President,

the issues highlighted earlier should also lead us to look at completion in a specific way. First, completion should sadly not be seen as a finish line that will only be crossed once. Therefore, transparency and genuine cooperation should be continued to be encouraged and supported and extension request, although remaining exceptional, should not be framed as a failure, especially when presented with concrete and detailed plans that are supported with adequate resources.

Secondly, the Article 5 process should remain a holistic exercise which considers root causes of delays and obstacles in meeting deadlines. In fact, often, delays and obstacles are connected to root causes that should always be considered in depth. We further recommend that localisation and national ownership remain central to all mine action activities, and we keep cautioning against any additionally burdensome process that adds further steps in Geneva, which would only compromise the quality of affected states engagement with the Article-5 process.

Thirdly, the path to completion should also be prepared responsibly. This does not only mean planning to maintain sustainable capacity for residual risk; but it also means be sure that mine action staff is sufficiently and meaningfully supported in the path towards demobilisation, as it is happening in Sri Lanka, where MAG is fully involved in a project which showed how it is never too early to think about responsible staff demobilisation.

Finally, let me echo the importance of the application of more general norms and principles in clearance and risk education that was mentioned in the President's paper mentioned earlier. Humanitarian principles should always be part of our framework, as well as other principles and norms whose implementation can be met through clearance and risk education, such as the protection of the right to life and the realisation of adequate standards of living.

The APMBC paved the way of humanitarian disarmament, and, in light of the incoming Review Conference, it is important that we keep valuing its principles and norms, while working all together on how those principles and norms concretely apply to specific contexts. It is only in this way that we can all work towards the prevention of harm and the response to contamination effects for the sake of people and communities all over the world.

I thank you, Mr President.