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## **United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

### **Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

**(17-20 June 2025)**

#### **Statement under agenda item 4a. Survey and Clearance**

*Delivered by Mr. Steinar Essen, UNDP*

*Geneva, 18 June 2025*

Ms. President<sup>1</sup>,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA)<sup>2</sup>.

Excellencies,

I would like to start by commemorating the deminers who lost their lives across the world since we met in Siem Reap. They made the ultimate sacrifice to protect communities. Their loss reminds us of how dangerous mine action is. We honour their memory.

As we enter the first year after the adoption of the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan, let us remember the importance of adhering to international mine action standards on deminers' safety and occupational health. Risk management, protective equipment, medical support, standard operating procedures, training and certification, and equipment maintenance are all key to protect deminers during clearance operations and must be included in plans and budgets. Put simply- those

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<sup>1</sup> H.E. Ms. Tomiko Ichikawa, Ambassador of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, President of the Twenty-Second Meeting of the States Parties.

<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 Peace 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.



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that are willing to risk their lives to protect others **MUST** be protected with the right training, equipment and operating frameworks. It is the least that we can do.

The UN continues to coordinate with National Mine Action authorities and NGOs to prioritise survey and clearance operations. The release of safe productive land to communities is a key enabler at the centre of activities such as agriculture, access to markets, education, economic development and peacebuilding: Such works in the beating heart of Mine Action.

We acknowledge the progress made by States requesting extensions and the plans they have presented to complete mine clearance efforts. Mine clearance is resource intensive and takes time. While advanced detection tools and robotics systems can make demining faster, they do not work on all terrains. Dense vegetation or rocky landscapes often require manual clearance. As shown in the video on South Sudan, clearance requires detailed surveying, specialized equipment and trained personnel to carefully detect and remove hazards.

Climate and environmental issues also influence the time required. Extreme weather conditions have slowed down operations in Iraq, South Sudan and many other countries. However, our sector is adapting. This year at the 28<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN28), partners discussed ways to manage environmental and climate change considerations in mine action programmes building on a new IMAS, a new technical note and NPA's Green Field Tool to assess environmental sensitivities and plan better.

We thank States Parties who contributed to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for mine action, helping UNMAS and the UN to conduct its crucial work. We also thank donors that have funded survey and clearance through donations to other UN agencies as part of integrated programming. In 2024, 20 countries contributed over US\$ 40 million to the UN VTF allowing



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the return of productive land in communities in 13 countries<sup>3</sup>. Clearly, a lot more is required for us to support these vital survey and clearance operations.

The United Nations welcomes Innovative finance initiatives, such as the GICHD's publication: *Innovative Finance for Mine Action Needs and Potential Solutions*, as well as efforts to improve the availability and flexibility of mine action funding. We also welcome the continued efforts of the Presidency and the Coordinating Committees for Article 5 Implementation and Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance to promote and explore sustainable funding opportunities for clearance operations.

Delegates will likely be aware of the significant funding reduction and shortfalls that the sector has faced in 2025 and is likely to face into 2026. These shortfalls have real world impact, reducing the work of the whole of the Mine Action community. The UN is gravely concerned and calls on National Authorities and donors to provide adequate, sustained, and predictable funding for mine action. It is an unfortunate truth that there will be many more casualties and livelihood lost unless we find a way to secure, diversify and guarantee funding for the sector.

We look forward to engaging in deeper dialogue with all of you on these important matters.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> UNMAS 2024 Annual Report.