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**Remarks to the Security Council on the
improvised explosive device threat situation in Somalia**

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UNHQ, New York**

Monsieur le Président,

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs les membres du Conseil de Sécurité

Je vous remercie de me faire l'honneur de présenter, au Conseil, la perspective du Service de lutte anti-mine des Nations Unies sur la question complexe de la menace posée par l'utilisation d'engins explosifs improvisés (EEI) par Al Shabaab, son impact sur les populations civiles, sur les contingents de l'AMISOM, et aussi sur les forces de sécurité somaliennes. Enfin, j'aborderai les activités conduites, en Somalie, par mon Service, pour réduire la menace des engins explosifs, en atténuer les effets, et préparer l'avenir.

[Mister President,

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Council members,

I am honored to address the Security Council on the threat posed by Al-Shabaab 's use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Somalia, their impact on the civilian population, AMISOM troops and the Somali security forces, and also present the activities carried out by the United Nations Mine Action Service to mitigate the threat posed by explosive ordnance in Somalia.]

[The IED threat]

The number of IED related incidents has risen from 402 in 2017, and 492 in 2018, to 529 in 2019, already reaching the number of 161 recorded through April 2020.

Between 1 January 2017 and 30 April 2020, 153 AMISOM troops and 489 Somali security forces were killed in targeted IED incidents; without counting the close to

600 people killed in the horrific IED attack that occurred on 14 October 2017 in Mogadishu, a reported 787 civilians have been killed and 1,779 were injured.

We have noted the drop in civilian casualties in Mogadishu, in 2020, which we attribute to the positive impact of the current “Mogadishu Security Plan” as well as of “operation Badbaado” in Lower Shabelle, which have limited the infiltration of explosive devices into Mogadishu, e.g. 1.17 vehicle-borne IED incident per month in 2019 compared to only one for the whole of 2020 to date.

Meanwhile, as Somali security forces have led military operations in Lower Shabelle, since the 2nd quarter of 2019, there has been a concomitant increase in Al-Shabaab’s IED attacks targeting the Somali National Army (SNA), causing an alarming increase in SNA casualties which, in the first quarter of 2020, and for the first time¹, have exceeded civilian casualties.

In recent years, al Shabaab’s manufacture of IEDs has shifted from using military-grade explosives to more readily available compounds and components, hence demonstrating its ability to adapt and also its determination to continue to use this method of warfare.

[UNMAS]

In Somalia, UNMAS is an integral component of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Somalia (UNSOM) as well as of the United Nations Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS).

UNMAS provides the Federal Government of Somalia with expert advice on the development of legislation, plans and policies, to mitigate the threat of explosive ordnance; it also produces regular Somalia-specific IED threat analysis which inform preventive and responsive actions by SNA, AMISOM and partners.

¹ in a comparable period since data was initially recorded in 2009, i.e. 86 SNA fatalities compared with 38 civilians.

UNMAS also assists the Mission and carries out clearance activities after indirect fire attacks against the United Nations compound in Mogadishu and the airport area.

With UNSOS support, UNMAS maintains a physical presence in all AMISOM sectors, and provides advice, analysis, training and mentoring to AMISOM uniformed personnel to find and destroy IEDs, and to safely operate in this high threat environment.

Since 2017, UNMAS has trained over 50,000 AMISOM troops, on subjects ranging from IED threat awareness, to search, detect and deploy “IED defeat” techniques. UNMAS uses and promotes a number of standardized training materials which it has elaborated to support the consistent growth of IED disposal operators across troop-contributing countries.

UNMAS training and mentoring of AMISOM “Mission Enabling Units” has increased troop confidence in the utilization of main supply routes and led to vastly increased consignment movements on main supply routes from Mogadishu to the sectors. UNMAS provides AMISOM with an explosive ordnance clearance capacity of 21 teams, working with 42 explosive detection dogs, to protect key infrastructure, such as airports, airstrips and AMISOM bases. UNMAS surveys, detection and clearance capacity also facilitates the construction of AMISOM forward-operating bases.

Mr. President, excellencies,

UNMAS support has contributed to a strengthened AMISOM capacity to respond and adapt to the evolving IED threat. While the number of IED incidents reported as targeting AMISOM has remained high, the AMISOM casualty rate per incident has decreased from 2017 to the present. Moreover, at the same time, there has been

a gradual increase in IED incidents which have had no impact on AMISOM. As I speak, despite COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, all UNMAS activities in support to AMISOM are ongoing, except for pre-deployment and in-person training.

In the past few years, UNMAS has responded to requests from the Somali Government to build the threat mitigation capacity of the Somali police.

To date UNMAS has trained and equipped the existing 14 Somali Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams. I want to thank those Member States that have provided UNMAS with the voluntary financial contributions necessary to support these activities.

Conclusion

UNMAS action has proven, and continues to prove, that it enhances AMISOM's force protection, mobility, and operational effectiveness, as well as contributes to reduction of casualties and fatalities amongst AMISOM ranks.

According to our analysis, Al Shabaab is likely to continue its IED attack against SNA personnel, using available precursors and ever-evolving and complex designs.

To be better equipped to operate safely and effectively in this IED threat environment, SNA troops require appropriate training, mentoring and "equipping" to standards similar to those guiding UNMAS support to AMISOM.

Effective, sustainable and accountable IED threat mitigation capabilities for Somali security forces would support the transition of security responsibilities from AMISOM.

Mr. President,

As an integrated component of UNSOM and UNSOS, UNMAS stands ready to extend its support to the SNA. It is our hope that the Security Council will consider expanding the categories of the United Nations non-lethal support package provided to the SNA, through United Nations Trust Fund for Somali security forces, to include IED threat mitigation support, namely the training, mentoring and equipment I have just presented. Should it be agreeable, I would then appeal to Member States and other partners to channel funding, earmarked to the strengthening of the SNA IED threat mitigation capabilities, through the United Nations Trust Fund mechanism.

Monsieur le Président,

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs les membres du Conseil de Sécurité

Je vous remercie de votre attention.