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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
(19 - 21 June 2023)

Statement On Victim¹ Assistance

Delivered by Ms. Ilene Cohn, Director of UNMAS

Geneva, 19 June 2023

Mr. Chair, members of Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action².

Data gathered by the United Nations to monitor trends in the 38 countries with a United Nations mine action presence identify a decrease in the casualties from mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices from an average of 17,000 per year between 2015 and 2019 to an average of just over 11,000 per year from 2020 to 2022.

This reduction is driven by a decline in casualties in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Syria. In Iraq for instance, the casualty rate fell from 5,000 in 2018 to 800 in 2022. This reduction can be attributed to a number of factors including successful clearance operations,

¹ In accordance with IMAS 13.10 on victim assistance in mine action, the term “victim” includes people killed, injured and/or impaired, their families, and communities affected by explosive ordnance. The term “survivor” is used for a direct victim who has been injured and/or impaired, but not killed as a result of an accident with explosive ordnance. The term “victim” is thus used to refer to the broader groups of victims, in line with applicable legal obligations regarding gross violation of international human rights law, and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

² The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action consists of twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes: 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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effective risk education efforts, and a reduction in the number of armed attacks five years after the end of military operations against ISIL.

Despite this progress, we are concerned by the recent appearance and increase of explosive ordnance incidents in West and Central Africa.

Children are particularly at risk. In 2022, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children verified more than 8,000 children maimed or killed in 25 situations of armed conflict, a significant proportion of whom were casualties of explosive ordnance.

The Oslo Action Plan requests State Parties to have a national referral mechanism in place to facilitate access to services for mine victims. In 2022, 14 UN mine action programmes were supporting referral pathways, compared to only 10 in 2018.

In Colombia, the UN supported the mine action authority to update existing referral pathways and as a result, 84 municipalities are now able to support new and existing victims. In Nigeria, the UN helped to map services for victims leading to the establishment of an effective referral pathway in the northeast of the country.

When referral pathways are not available, the UN may provide direct assistance. In 2022, UNICEF and its partners expanded victim assistance programming to reach almost 5,700 children in 12 countries. The range of services also expanded to include cash transfers, family treatment and rehabilitation, and livelihood support. In Yemen, 245 child victims in the most affected Governorates received prosthesis and referrals to appropriate services.



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The United Nations also promoted economic opportunities for victims. In Cambodia, UNDP supported skills training, small business management training, job placements, and grants for disabled persons organizations.

Victim assistance funding for child and adult survivors is desperately needed in many countries, including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

To call attention to the rights and needs of victims, in December 2022 the United Nations appointed Mr. Giles Duley as Global Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Conflict and Peacebuilding situations. He will speak later this week in the NDM-UN plenary on the importance of ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities, including survivors of explosive ordnance incidents, are included in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.

Earlier this year, the UN endorsed an International Mine Action Standard on Victim Assistance, which was developed in consultation with many stakeholders and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of mine action actors. I hope it will be a useful contribution to reaching the objectives of the Convention.