

**Introductory Statement of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
on “Assistance in Mine Action” to Fourth Committee delivered by
Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General, Rule of Law and Security
Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations
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**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to address this important session and deliver a statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for peacekeeping operations in his capacity of the Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. As you know, this UN coordination platform is dedicated to increasing coherence, as well as the positive impact of mine action. This mechanism, combined with other humanitarian coordination mechanisms, such as the Global Protection Cluster, ensures the most effective response to countries and communities affected by mines and explosive remnants of war.

Many United Nations resolutions do reflect the reality that mine action is a core component of all international efforts pertaining to humanitarian emergencies, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, human rights and development. In other words, the United Nations’ work in mine action is a concrete illustration of the reform of the Secretary-General, where synergies and coordination amongst various UN pillars should make the United Nations more effective.

2017 is a particularly significant year for mine action work; as it marks the twentieth anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention which designated the Secretary-General as its depository; it also marks the twentieth anniversary of the creation by this General Assembly of UNMAS, the United Nations Mine Action Service; and therefore, also twenty years of coordination through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action.

I have three main messages for you today.

First, international humanitarian and human rights law is the cornerstone of humanitarian mine action. Since the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention’s entry into force, it counts 162 States parties; over 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, while 30 States parties have completed their clearance obligations.

Second, there has been significant progress achieved in the last two decades. This is the result of effective partnerships between Member States, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. It is also somewhat related to the increase in the number of UN resolutions referring to the criticality of the humanitarian and human rights dimensions of assistance in mine action.

One of the most important achievements I would like to mention today is the dramatic decrease in anti-personnel mine casualties over these two decades. Countries like Colombia and Afghanistan, to name just a few, have indeed seen a notable decrease in the number of victims.

I also want to note the positive impact of increased adherence to mine action standards. In this regard, I commend the global leadership, innovation and creativity of UNMAS which received most recently the Secretary-General's recognition as well as the honours of a prestigious foundation. Today, the UN benefits from the updated UN Policy on Victim Assistance; and soon the mine action sector will also benefit from UNMAS ongoing update of the International Mine Action Standards. It is important for mine action standards to adapt to the evolution of methods and devices used by parties to conflicts.

Progress is also notably related to a systematic operationalization of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Thanks to United Nations monitoring and evaluation efforts, I am pleased to report that UN mine action programmes, globally, are achieving high levels of adherence to the Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes and that the number of women employed by the mine action sector, at various levels, keeps increasing.

More can be done to assist conflict-affected communities. Coordination and partnerships are key to the effectiveness of our collective efforts. It is fitting that the resolution you have drafted reflects the realities on the ground and mentions the humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The increasing shift to urban warfare makes it critical to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

Third, mine action is a critical component and enabler of humanitarian action; it is also crucial for building peace, and for enabling and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Last year, more than 185 square kilometres of suspected contaminated land – an area more than three times the size of Manhattan - was rendered safe from landmines and explosive remnants of war. More than 140 hospitals, 220 schools and almost 500 markets were made safe from explosive hazard contamination in countries and territories where the UN operates.

The dynamics of UN deployments have adapted to the evolution of conflicts. Even in the midst of active hostilities, individuals and communities receive mine action assistance. Affected populations benefit from risk education, clearance and victim assistance. IDP camps can be safely built and access to schools and hospitals is made safe. In Iraq, the United Nations is supporting the Government's stabilization efforts in areas liberated from Da'esh; water and electricity was restored to Mosul by the United Nations shortly after the conflict, following explosive hazard assessments of more than 270 electricity and water sites.

In conclusion, the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war remains stronger than ever. As Secretary-General Guterres said, "No one should have to live in fear of dying even after the fighting stops" and "Peace without mine action is an incomplete peace". As we celebrate the reduction of casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines, we must also remember the 40% increase in casualties recorded by the United Nations in 2016, which resulted from the full range of devices: explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines. The world cannot afford complacency.

Stronger partnerships, closer cooperation with all stakeholders, supported by reliable, predictable, timely and, possibly, multi-annual financial contributions, will yield

extraordinary returns on investments: lives will be saved, communities rebuilt and countries back on track for social and economic development and sustainable peace.

I welcome this draft resolution, and the mandate it gives to the United Nations. Rest assured of the UN's effective implementation of the mandates that you are entrusting to the Organisation.

Thank you.