

**Group of Experts of Amended Protocol II
of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
General Exchange of Views
22 August 2019**

Mr. President¹,

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are primarily responsible for the increase in casualties from explosive ordnance in recent years. Over 5,000 incidents have been recorded worldwide in 2018, with Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Somalia and Syria, ranking among the most affected countries. These deadly devices not only kill and injure children and adults, hinder development and put humanitarian and United Nations personnel at risk, but they also inflict much more serious injuries² on more individuals in a single incident than manufactured landmines.

In addition to the human cost, there is often an extra financial cost to detecting and defusing IEDs. The increased scale, lethality, sophistication and evolving designs present technical and operational challenges and require experts to significantly adjust their operations, equipment and training.

The United Nations Mine Action Service plays a particular role in support of the international community's efforts to address this growing threat.

¹ Zbigniew Czech, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations Office at Geneva, President-designate of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

² [“Improvised explosive devices inflict much more serious injuries than land mines,”](#) *BMJ* (23 August 2017).

In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the continued support of UNMAS to the co-coordinators of France and Colombia in leading the work of High Contracting Parties on IEDs within the framework of this Protocol.

Excellencies,

The UN carries out a variety of activities to prevent and mitigate the threat posed by IEDs. Under the Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda: 'Securing our Common Future', UNMAS has been tasked, in cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and other relevant UN entities, to promote a strengthened and coherent inter-agency coordination on IEDs to ensure a whole-of-system approach.

This approach will increase the overall effectiveness of the Organization's response in key areas, such as security assessment, staff safety and security, strategic planning, policy development, humanitarian and protection responses, and implementation of operational mandates.

In addition, we have made progress on several fronts.

First, UNMAS is administering an online knowledge hub on IED threat mitigation, which has become a reference for information-sharing and coordination across the Organization.

Second, UNMAS has an IED Threat Mitigation Advisory Team, which facilitates an informed dialogue on IED threat mitigation within the United Nations system and between relevant international stakeholders. It has produced guidance and training modules³ for use in pre-deployment training of peacekeepers, in

³ DPKO/DFS Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings, IED Threat Mitigation Military and Police Handbook, IED Lexicon, United Nations IED Disposal Standards.

collaboration with the Department of Peace Operations Office of the Military Advisor and Integrated Training Service. We thank State Parties who have contributed to this effort by providing experts and look forward to reinforcing the team in the service of High Contracting Parties and bolster international cooperation.

Thirdly, UNMAS has initiated the “Smart IED Threat Mitigation Technology Roadmap”. This initiative aims to better coordinate United Nations entities and international partners by improving knowledge of the threat, exchanging technical information on IEDs, identifying suitable technology and ongoing threat mitigation initiatives. It will be presented in more detail this afternoon and we hope that it will garner your support.

Fourth, the United Nations has recently endorsed three new International Mine Action Standards associated with IED Disposal, which will help improve the safety of IED disposal personnel. I would like to thank States, as well as NGOs, academics and the private sector for their engagement in this critical effort. More specifically, the standard on “Improvised Explosive Device Disposal” establishes the framework for qualification and training of IEDD operators.

The standard on “Building Clearance” provides additional guidance to national mine action authorities for the establishment of clearance parameters for all explosive ordnance, and for any building. And finally, the standard on “Risk Management in Mine Action” will raise awareness and equip mine action managers with the tools needed to assess, control and review risk, including those arising from IEDs.

These new IMAS complement the United Nations IED Disposal Standards which apply in all current peace operations.

Excellencies,

UNMAS is proud to support States in the battle against IEDs and an example from Iraq illustrates the impact of these efforts. With the financial support of many nations in the room, and under the leadership of the Government of Iraq, UNMAS has surveyed 288 million square meters of land retaken from ISIL/Daesh since August 2016, and has cleared 63,000 explosive hazards, including over 2,400 IEDs, 17 tons of homemade explosives and 1,000 suicide belts – many of which were removed from human remains.

In a multi-dimensional environment with extensive rubble and debris from damaged buildings, special expertise is required. UNMAS Iraq has cleared over 1,700 critical infrastructure sites contributing to mobility, hygiene, health and education of the population. Recently, it finished surveying and clearing several schools from IEDs and booby-traps in Mosul, enabling UNICEF and UNDP to renovate and reopen schools and thousands of children to catch up on missed school years.

Indeed, reducing risks related to explosive ordnance, including from Improvised Explosive Devices, is a strategic priority of the UN Mine Action Strategy for 2019-2023, and we will continue to work with affected States and relevant stakeholders to protect civilians and mobilize support for victim assistance.

Thank you.