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“Plenary Session 5: Strengthening Peace and Stability”

**TICAD VII
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Yokohama, Japan**

Honorable Chairman,

Excellencies Heads of states and Governments,

All protocol observed,

At the outset, allow me to thank affected countries and troop contributing countries for their trust in UNMAS and African communities for their hospitality despite challenging conditions.

I also want to commend Prime Minister Abe for his vision and leadership during this TICAD7, and for inviting UNMAS to contribute to this August forum; I want also to express my gratitude to his country, Japan, for its valuable political and financial support, without which positive achievements in human security in Africa, through mine action, would be fewer.

My reflections today draw from over two decades of contribution of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to Africa human security, peace and stability.

- African Ownership at institutional, national and community level is the corner stone of sustainable progress and lasting solutions. States carry the primary responsibility in devising solutions that are context specific.**
- Partnership, including South/South, with other States, private sector and international organizations is also key in enabling affected countries to benefit from innovation, technological assistance, best practices, and also necessary funding.**

At Global and regional level:

- **Under the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, UNMAS own Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union, allowed for the elaboration of the AU Framework on mine action and the on-going development on AMISOM counter-IED strategy, just to name two examples of collaboration;**
- **Explicit references to mine action must be incorporated, when appropriate, in ceasefire and peace agreements, as well as in the mandates of peace operations, also as appropriate, in light of the potential that mine action can have as a peace- and confidence-building measure in post-conflict situations among the parties concerned and in view of the ongoing dangers faced by peacekeeping personnel and host populations;**
- **To defeat international criminal and violent extremist networks a sub-regional and multi-dimensional approach is increasingly critical;**

At national level:

Institution building and national capabilities

- **It is essential to establish new national mine action capacities or develop existing ones, including expanding national expertise and strengthening the capacity of the security sector, and supporting the countries' fulfilment of mine action related international obligations;**

- Experience shows that UNMAS support to planning and programming of national programmes, taking into consideration the different needs of women, girls, boys and men, strengthens programmes sustainability; greater efficiency, including cost effectiveness, of building and/or strengthening national mine action capacities and institutions, is achieved when early dialogue, joint planning and programming with host countries is undertaken;
- For stability efforts to succeed, reliable, predictable and timely financial contributions of international donors are critical, including through national mine action programmes or through Trust Funds such as the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action;
- Provision of vocational training and employment of youth, including women, like UNMAS has done and does in Mali and Somalia, for instance, as well as opening job opportunities for former combatants, will weaken appeals to join violent extremist groups.

Partnerships with states, international organizations and private sector

- Are essential to:
 - Provide technological assistance (i) to countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war; and (ii) to promote user-oriented scientific research on and development of mine action techniques and technologies that are effective, sustainable, appropriate and environmentally sound;

- **Exchange necessary information and technical, financial and material assistance to locate, remove, destroy and otherwise render ineffective explosive remnants of war, landmines, cluster munitions and IEDs, and minefields;**

UNMAS experience and examples:

- **In asymmetric warfare environments, UNMAS comprehensive approach to IED Threat Mitigation, from capacity building and technological assistance to risk education, reduces the threat to the local population and disrupts the activities of networks. For this reason, UNMAS advisory, technical assistance and direct interventions are becoming invaluable to addressing conflict.**
- **IED threat mitigation support to the AMISOM, through training and mentoring, has drastically reduced fatalities and enhanced AMISOM mobility in a high IED threat security environment.**
- **Capacity building of the Mogadishu police enables them to respond to IED attacks without international mentoring;**
- **The removal of explosive devices is critical to the return of 1.8 million people displaced in north-east Nigeria;**
- **In eastern Sudan, mine action activities commenced in 2006 shortly after the Eastern States Peace Agreement (ESPA) was signed; Japanese funding to UNMAS contributed substantially to Eastern states becoming free of known landmine contamination: Geradef in 2016, Red Sea in 2017 and Kassala in 2018.**

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Thanks to Japan and other partners' support to UNMAS work in Africa, greater numbers of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Refugees can now move without fear; they can safely return to their communities; farmers and animal herders can safely access more land with increased productivity; critical infrastructures, water and electricity plants, roads, bridges, schools and hospitals are now accessible and can be rehabilitated.

Normalization of everyday activities and people's dignity are restored and their trust in governmental institutions strengthened.

And African countries' path towards stabilization, recovery and development of conflict areas is made easier by the mitigation of risks posed by explosive hazards.

I would like to reiterate my strong wish that the people of Japan and UNMAS continue to partner closely to build a resilient and stable Africa.