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“Thematic Session 1: Science, Technology and Innovation”

**TICAD VII
29 August 2019
Yokohama, Japan**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
All protocol observed,**

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have significantly increased the number of casualties, worldwide, in recent years.

Over 5000 incidents have been recorded worldwide in 2018.

Attacks involving IEDs have become a widely used tactic by violent extremists on the African continent.

IEDs, unexploded ordnance, including landmines and cluster munitions, kill and threaten the lives of civilians, humanitarian workers and UN peacekeepers.

For example, in central Mali, the number of civilian casualties caused by IEDs has nearly tripled. Moreover, since the deployment of MINUSMA in 2013, 70 peacekeepers have been killed and over 360 injured in incidents involving improvised explosive devices

The human, political and financial toll taken by explosive devices is dramatically high. A wide range of efforts invested in human security are directly and adversely affected.

These devices' high lethality, increased sophistication as well as complex and evolving designs, present technical and operational

challenges and require experts to constantly adjust their approach, training, equipment and operations.

As huge a challenge for Africa as it may sound, it is not an incurable illness.

The United National Mine Action Service leads their United Nations’ promotion of technology, innovation and capacity development of African national authorities of affected countries as well as of African peacekeepers.

UNMAS’ entire political and technical capability, in particular its IED Threat Mitigation Advisory Team, is devoted to assisting all stakeholders with information exchange, international dialogue and the promotion of South-South exchanges. UNMAS produces guidance and training modules¹ for peacekeepers before their deployment and it supports affected states.

UNMAS latest and already praised initiative, the “Smart IED Threat Mitigation Technology Roadmap”, illustrate the constructive power of public/private partnership. UNMAS establishes the UN platform which brings together United Nations entities, affected states and a wide range of international partners to better understand the threat, exchange technical information on IEDs, identify suitable technology, and connect with ongoing threat mitigation initiatives. It is designed to

¹ DPKO/DFS Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings, IED Threat Mitigation Military and Police Handbook, IED Lexicon, United Nations IED Disposal Standards.

leverage technology and innovation, strengthen coordination of international efforts and organize knowledge-sharing.

Not only will engineers and mine action operators benefit from the progress it will trigger in harnessing knowledge, research and technologies;

but most importantly, UNMAS innovative platform will promote more effective prevention initiatives and greater protection of affected populations, including displaced and refugees.

UNMAS led public/private meeting of minds, technologies and other resources will also enhance the effectiveness of international assistance to victims of explosive hazards.

We look forward to forging new partnerships and promoting innovation in mine action, for African countries and communities emerging from conflicts to enjoy a durable peace, stability and development.

I thank you.