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**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**  
**Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**  
**(22-24 June 2021)**

**Victim Assistance: Establishing or Strengthening a Centralised Database**

*Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva Office, UNMAS*

Mr. President,<sup>1</sup>

On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA),<sup>2</sup> let me begin by congratulating the Presidency on its leadership in convening the Intersessional Meetings under these unusual and difficult circumstances.

Since it is the first time, we are taking the floor, allow me to echo the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to convey once more our deepest condolences to the victims of the recent and outrageous attack on our Afghan colleagues of the HALO Trust that occurred in Afghanistan. The United Nations condemns, yet again, in the strongest possible terms, those who target members of a humanitarian organization seeking to support mine-affected communities. Our thoughts are with the injured deminers and their loved ones and the families of the deceased.

Excellencies,

Much remains to be done to improve sustainable victim assistance. The pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on persons with disabilities, mine victims among them. Devastating casualties persist, including through the widespread use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature by predominantly non-state armed groups in conflict situations. For example, a sad milestone was reached in Colombia in February 2021, passing the mark of 12,000 officially registered victims of explosive ordnance. During the previous four years, the majority of casualties have been civilians. In Afghanistan, explosive ordnance-related casualties, especially those caused by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature, continue to rise while financial resources needed to address these deadly threats are on the decline.

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<sup>1</sup> H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva

<sup>2</sup> 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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Many States Parties with significant numbers of victims can still make good progress by developing and implementing action plans. Reliable referral systems and funding for victim assistance also still need to be expanded and maintained long-term. Examples of progress include in Somalia, the development of a UN-supported National Action Plan for Victims and Disability Assistance and, in Afghanistan, a National Disability Inclusion Strategy developed also with support from the United Nations and in consultation with governmental and civil society stakeholders. However, in Afghanistan, while in 2019 some 693 explosive ordnance child victims were supported by UNICEF, this programme was halted in 2020 due to lack of resources.

Mr. President,

The United Nations urges States Parties to prioritize victim assistance. The United Nations has a dedicated UN policy on Victim Assistance and our 2019-2023 United Nations Mine Action Strategy reflects our commitment to promoting the equal access of survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance to health and education and their full participation in social and economic life.

The United Nations Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism tracks progress against the UN Mine Action Strategy in some 30 countries where the United Nations has a presence. We thank Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands for funding this initiative. Consequently, we know that explosive ordnance casualties increased in these countries from 13,574 in 2018 to 15,764 in 2019 but decreased to 10,102 in 2020.

Excellencies,

In the Oslo Action Plan, the States Parties have agreed to establish and strengthen centralized databases that include information on persons killed by mines as well as on persons injured by mines and their needs and challenges, disaggregated by gender, age and disability. It has also been agreed to make this information available to relevant stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive response to addressing the needs of mine victims. The United Nations Secretariat, Agencies, Funds and Programmes are working to improve their monitoring and evaluation processes to strengthen data on victims and the support they receive.

The Government of Viet Nam, with the support of UNDP, has launched the first large-scale data collection initiative focusing on persons with disabilities, which will enhance strategic planning, prioritization and national victim assistance programmes.

The United Nations invites all States Parties to reaffirm and implement this commitment. Mine victims have the right to the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing. Improved data will help identify and track efforts to meet the needs of survivors, their families and affected communities; and help mitigate the risk of leaving victims behind.

Thank you.

END.