

Opening Remarks by

Assistant Secretary-General Dmitry Titov

**On behalf of the Chair of the United Nations
Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

**18th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors
and UN Advisors**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Ladsous, and in my capacity as Chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, it is my pleasure to address you today.

The theme of this eighteenth meeting is ‘More than Mines’. Initially, the issue of anti-personnel landmines is what brought us together, and the international community has made great progress in eradicating this heinous threat. As the United Nations Secretary-General made it clear: “Eliminating the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war is a crucially

important endeavour that advances peace, enables development, supports nations in transition, and saves lives.”

However, the danger of being killed or maimed by explosive hazards goes well beyond landmines. Unsecure weapons and ammunition in the Central African Republic and Libya – along with IEDs in Somalia, Afghanistan and Mali – target civilians and peacekeepers alike. In fact, today in Afghanistan, ten times more civilians are being killed by IEDs than landmines. In Mali, UNMAS has recorded almost 400 confirmed IED casualties, of which 136 have been peacekeepers. And globally, the NGO ‘Action on Armed Violence’ has reported a 69 per cent increase in civilians either killed or injured by IEDs, from 2011 to 2013¹.

¹ From 13,179 victims in 2011 to 22,289 in 2013.

That is why, in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, we are aiming for increased modernization, flexibility and effectiveness, in order to meet the challenges of today's dynamic operational environments. DPKO manages an \$8.5 billion budget and deploys nearly 123,000 uniformed and civilian peacekeepers. In order to keep this large, multifaceted operation running smoothly and effectively, the Department has committed to continuous innovation and better integrated planning. It has also placed a priority on enhanced cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations (including the European Union, African Union and NATO).

As you may know, the Secretary-General has established a High-level Panel to review United Nations' approaches to peace operations. UNMAS, which is actively engaged in this

process, has provided extensive input on behalf of the mine action community. I trust that the Panel will take note of the importance of mine action – and hope that this will be reflected in the way peacekeeping operates in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For me, the United Nations Mine Action Service remains a flagship, model organization, serving humanity at the very frontlines of the world. The Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is proud to include UNMAS among its five components.

UNMAS works in tandem with Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration colleagues to destroy weapons recovered from ex-combatants – thus helping ensure the protection of civilians. UNMAS collaborates with UN Police and Security Sector Management experts to ensure that national police and defense forces know how to store their weapons and ammunition securely and safely. And UNMAS provides technical expertise to Rule of Law colleagues in drafting national legislation on arms control and other topics.

In this way, the concerns and knowledge of mine action colleagues are integrated with all of the work we do in the security and justice sectors – because no peacekeeping component can work in isolation.

Peace operations are adapting, and so is mine action. For example in *Libya*, the United Nations family came together to provide a rapid humanitarian mine action response to protect civilians in a complex post-conflict situation. UNDP supported the development of national capacity; UNICEF delivered risk education; and UNMAS supported the stabilization of Libya by building safe storage for weapons and ammunition. And before the crisis erupted, we were aiming to achieve even more, including in the area of weapon destruction.

In *Somalia*, UNMAS is training and equipping counter-IED elements within the national police force and African Union troops. Since January, the first units are independently operating to respond to the increasing IED threat in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is clear that mine action – in Somalia, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Haiti, Afghanistan and many other places – continues to facilitate freedom of movement and support both immediate and longer-term socio-economic recovery in post-conflict environments. However, more needs to be done.

First, we need to talk about ‘**More than Mines**’ to develop a common understanding and foundation that allows us to protect lives and livelihoods from a range of explosive hazards. In addition, while providing support to peacekeepers and humanitarians, mine action must also look to addressing longer-term stabilization.

Second, we must keep a clear focus on our **common vision and goals**. The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 sets a clear vision – and I quote – *“a world free of the threat of mines and the explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to development and where the human rights and needs of victims are met and survivors are fully integrated as equal members of their societies”*.

This year, the United Nations will be conducting a mid-term review of the strategy to assess our progress and, if necessary, refine our strategic objectives. This will involve broad and in-depth consultation with all of you and your colleagues. We need your feedback, and we welcome it.

Third, we must stay committed to **working together to keep mine action high on the international agenda**. The Secretary-General will issue his report on Assistance in Mine Action this year, which will pave the way for the adoption of a General Assembly resolution on Assistance in Mine Action. This provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the evolution of mine action and garner support for mandates that are ‘fit for purpose’.

Fourth, the United Nations must prioritize **national ownership**. At this meeting, National Directors will chair panels and share the experience of their countries. This is exactly how it should be – National Directors are uniquely positioned to identify the emerging threats facing your countries, as well as effective new approaches designed to address them.

Finally, we are aware that **generating the necessary resources** continues to be a major challenge. I would like to highlight the launch of the Global Portfolio of Mine Action Projects for 2015, which comprises more than 20 country envelopes. I call on donors to take note of the funding gaps identified in this portfolio and to match needs with resources. We need your support.

Yet, at the same time, it is only fair that I also call on my colleagues in UNMAS and the IACG to be more responsive to donors' views and – more broadly – focused on management issues. We have to give more substantive feedback and smarter reporting.² We must demonstrate true value for money. UNMAS and the IACG should develop an up-to-date resource mobilization strategy, so that donors can understand

² Para 30, OIOS report

our global needs in mine action, see more clearly how their priorities link with ours, and plan their efforts accordingly.³

This Group, the IACG, should meet regularly – at a senior level – in order to work on all of these objectives.⁴

With these points in mind, our agenda has been developed to inspire and equip national and international practitioners to embrace the challenges ahead. Let us continue to develop innovative responses that protect civilians and contribute to stabilization of States recovering from conflict. I wish you all a productive conference and look forward to hearing the outcomes.

³ Para 48, OIOS report

⁴ Para 52 OIOS report