



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 12 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres; Ms. Michelle Yeoh, United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador; Mr. Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; and Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, Provincial Programme Manager and Manager of Project RENEW, as well as the statements delivered by Their Excellencies Mr. Bui Thanh Son, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam; Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland; Ms. Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya; Mr. Othman Jerandi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of Tunisia; Ms. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the United States and Member of President Biden's Cabinet; Mr. Erki Kodar, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia; Mr. Vikas Swarup, Vice-Minister and Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs of India; Mr. Jens Frølich Holte, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway; Ms. Keisal Peters, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; as well as by the representatives of China, France, Mexico, the Niger, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in connection with the video-teleconference on "Maintenance of international peace and security: mine action and sustaining peace — stronger partnerships for better delivery", convened on Thursday, 8 April 2021.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, the European Union, Germany, Guatemala, the Holy See, Indonesia, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Libya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic,



these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**  
President of the Security Council

## Annex 1

### Briefing by the Secretary-General

Let me first congratulate His Excellency Mr. Bui Thanh Son on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam and welcome him to the United Nations.

I thank Viet Nam for putting this important issue on the agenda and for reminding us of the work left to do.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) maim and kill indiscriminately. They are left in the path of women walking to work, families displaced by conflict and seeking safety, and children on their way to school. They crush lives and end livelihoods. Their mere presence can stall development and shatter stability.

Since resolution 2365 (2017) was adopted in 2017, Member States, the United Nations and regional and civil society partners have released significant expanses of land. From 2018 to 2020, United Nations funding made more than 560 square kilometres of land safe, from Afghanistan to Iraq and from Cambodia to Colombia. That land, which is 10 times the area of Manhattan, is needed for infrastructure, agriculture, markets, schools and roads.

In 2020, more than 3.5 million people were reached by United Nations-supported risk reduction, enabling communities to go about their daily business more safely. Today the United Nations Mine Action Service supports 13 peace operations, and IED-threat mitigation training has contributed to peacekeeper safety, particularly in Mali. In 2014, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali detected 11 per cent of IEDs before they exploded. This rate rose to 50 per cent in 2020, with fatalities from IED attacks declining accordingly. And three quarters of the countries and territories in which the United Nations conducts mine action have now developed their own national standards to ensure quality and keep deminers safe.

But, while progress has been made, challenges have intensified. Conflict has become more urbanized, armed groups are proliferating and the use of IEDs is increasing. All these factors complicate efforts to mitigate and respond to the threat — which, in the past year, has been exacerbated by access and mobility hurdles due to the coronavirus disease. Today is our opportunity to take stock. Let me highlight three areas for attention.

First, the constant threat of explosive ordnance endangers the lives of the people serving in and protected by our missions. I urge Member States to ensure that all peace operations have the capacity to operate in environments facing high explosive threats, and particularly IEDs. Peacekeepers must have the knowledge and the equipment they need to deliver on their mandates safely.

The use of IEDs continues to represent the greatest threat to the troops of the African Union Mission in in Somalia and to United Nations peacekeepers in Mali. New threats from explosives are emerging in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And landmines and explosive remnants of war hinder peacekeeper mobility in South Sudan and Abyei.

The evolving nature of explosive devices and their use requires us to constantly update our situational awareness and adapt our predeployment and in-mission training. I thank Kenya for hosting the recent Arria Formula meeting on the threat posed to peacekeepers by IEDs, and I urge Member States to enhance their commitment to training and equipping troop- and police-contributing countries. I also appeal to troop- and police-contributing countries to invest in training and retaining the necessary expertise in their security services.

Secondly, I want to highlight the role of mine action in advancing and underpinning durable solutions to conflict. Mine action is an essential first step towards peace and stability. Deminers are often the first to enter cities and villages after ceasefires — clearing schools and hospitals, or allowing for critical repairs to water or sanitation infrastructure. Mine action enables the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. And mine action can support political and peace processes. We have seen this in Darfur and Libya. In Colombia, mine action has facilitated the reintegration of former combatants, offering a pathway to civilian life.

Let us maximize the opportunities that mine action affords us. For example, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Colombia to South Sudan, women deminers and risk educators have broken stereotypes to keep their communities safe, contributing to the women and peace and security agenda. Today we will hear from a briefer who led an all-women demining team, contributing to mine clearance and decontamination in Viet Nam.

Whether clearing roads to farmland, routes to alternative youth employment or access to services for victims and persons with disabilities, mine action can lay the groundwork for sustainable development and inclusion. I urge the Security Council to strengthen efforts to further integrate mine action into relevant resolutions, reporting and sanctions regimes.

This brings me to my third and final point. We need increased political will and cooperation to prevent and respond to the threat of explosive ordnance. More than 160 States are party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I call on those that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so without delay.

Mine action means working on prevention — to end the threat at its source. It means clearing contaminated land to save lives and enable recovery. And it means attending to the rights and needs of survivors who have been maimed by these horrendous implements of warfare.

Ultimately, mine action is a national responsibility. I welcome efforts by many Member States to integrate mine action into their development plans and budgets. But political will at the national level must be complemented by partnerships and cooperation at the local, regional and international levels. Strong cooperation is needed among Governments, the United Nations and international and civil society organizations. In that regard, I welcome the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in reducing the threat of IEDs.

Landmines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war represent the worst of humankind. But efforts to eradicate them reflect humankind at its best. Let us today commit to intensifying our efforts to rid the world of these inhumane threats.

## Annex 2

### **Briefing by United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador Michelle Yeoh**

It is my honour to welcome all participants to this open debate on mine action. Let me take this opportunity and thank the Government of Viet Nam for organizing this important and timely event and for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

As some may know, I am a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an agency committed to helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mine Action is linked to the SDGs, and it is important to look at the issue beyond square metres cleared. UNDP's approach is to demonstrate the long-term development impact of mine action, such as improved livelihoods, the creation of new jobs and the utilization of released land for agricultural purposes or tourism.

Mine Action is not a topic of the past; in fact, it is a clear and present danger. Less than a month ago, an ammunition depot explosion in Equatorial Guinea killed almost 100 people, injured over 600 and left thousands of people homeless.

Nearly 19,000 deaths and injuries were recorded across the world in 2020 as being a result of the use of explosive weapons. Civilians continue to suffer disproportionately, accounting for 59 per cent of total casualties. In countries like Yemen and Syria, mines and other explosive ordnance hinder the safe return of millions of displaced people and block access to their homes and agricultural fields, depriving them of opportunities to rebuild their lives.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has further hampered operations to rid contaminated land of un-exploded ordnance. Landmines are particularly controversial because they do not discriminate among soldiers, farmers, civilians or children. They not only cause injury or death but also hamper economic growth.

UNDP and its partners have been involved in mine action since 1993, when the programme was first launched in Cambodia. It is a key player in the United Nations efforts to implement the Strategy on Mine Action, which includes supporting early-recovery efforts and sustaining peace, addressing the gaps in humanitarian response and supporting national mine-action institutions and sustainable development. This is in keeping with our goal of leaving no one behind.

Mine action helps to create safe livelihoods in affected communities by launching emergency jobs, reconstructing damaged infrastructure, implementing repatriation plans and rebuilding trust between people.

We can celebrate numerous achievements where UNDP and its partners have been at the forefront of advocating for landmine-free countries. Albania, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Mozambique and Uganda declared themselves free of known mine fields, meeting demining obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. But we still have a long way to go. Therefore, the Government of Viet Nam's decision to call for this open debate is critically important.

As acclaimed actor and United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards Daniel Craig highlighted in his message on International Mine Awareness Day: there is still contamination in countries where war has long been over. Viet Nam is one of those countries where explosive ordnance still poses a daily risk to villagers and their livelihoods.

According to the Government of Viet Nam, the contaminated area covers about 6.13 million hectares, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the country's surface. Tens of thousands have either been killed or maimed after the end of hostilities due to the deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance.

Due to the determination of its Government, and with support from many of the members of the Security Council, Viet Nam is working hard to overcome this problem. For instance, Viet Nam is in the process of updating regulations to bring them closer in line with international best practices.

In December of last year, Viet Nam hosted an important conference on women and peace and security. Following the conference, the Hanoi Commitment to Action, with 75 co-sponsors, was formally submitted in February to the Presidents of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. It highlights the importance of including women in building and sustaining peace, including in mine action. Women play an important role in mine action in Viet Nam, leading as well as being members of clearance teams. Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, who will also speak at this event, is a shining example of women supporting this cause.

When I started acting, women were not seen as action stars. I had to break that stereotype. Today there are more women in action roles, and that diversity has made films even more engaging and empowered many more women to achieve their dreams. All mine-affected countries should consider the involvement of women in all aspects of mine action as a key element of a successful intervention that benefits everyone.

There is still much work to do to reduce risks and build a better future for mine-affected communities. First, we need to raise awareness at the national and international levels of the role mine action plays in achieving the SDGs, including by highlighting evidence to engage more voices on the work and impact of mine action. Secondly, we need financing and new partnerships to accelerate our efforts. Mine action financing has shown a downward trend.

I want to end by recalling that on 4 April we celebrated the International Day of Mine Awareness. Today let us reaffirm our commitment to eradicating landmines and assisting those who have been harmed by them. It is the human thing to do — and we need to do it together.

## Annex 3

### **Briefing by the Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Stefano Toscano**

Mine action is needed more than ever. Every day, new mines are laid in different regions of the globe. The harm and pain suffered by their victims is similar across countries and over time. What has changed over the past decade is the type of mines being used, their placement and who lays them. Responses to contamination are evolving accordingly. The story of mine action is one of an adaptive, collaborative and solution-oriented sector.

Mines and cluster munitions pose a severe threat to security and are an obstacle to lasting peace. Today's debate provides a unique opportunity to discuss mine action within the United Nations organ responsible for peace and security. I am grateful to the Vietnamese presidency for putting this topic on the agenda of the Security Council and for inviting the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to take part in this debate.

There is a long history of cooperation between Viet Nam and the Centre, and I still have fond memories of my first visit as GICHD Director to Viet Nam, where I witnessed a strong commitment from the Government to addressing contamination from past wars. The Centre was founded internationally in 1998 as a result of an initiative by the Swiss Government, following the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We work with national authorities on the development of appropriate strategies, standards and institutional frameworks. We bring forward innovative approaches, methods and tools, keeping mine action up to speed with new challenges.

The mine action sector is facing new challenges. These are relevant to the Security Council as well.

Current conflicts are typically fragmented and protracted, with a multiplicity of actors, agendas and risks. And they are often associated with recurrent violations of international humanitarian law. To quote the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, "city centers and residential areas have become the battlefields of our time." As a result, the impact on civilians and infrastructure is exacerbated.

In this context, we are witnessing an increased use of, and contamination from, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), particularly in urban and populated areas. IED casings can range from soda cans, plastic bags and pressure cookers to shoeboxes, suicide vests and gas cylinders. This makes them particularly dangerous to civilians and hard to find and dispose of. IED contamination is not new, but the extent is unprecedented. The interconnectedness of risks adds to the complexity of the working environment — for example, diverted ammunition stockpiles can be used to manufacture IEDs.

Mine action remains a necessary response to a humanitarian imperative. It is also an enabler of broader humanitarian action, a precondition for reconstruction and development and can serve as a conduit for peace. The mine action community has made great efforts to link its activities to broader agendas, highlighting its transformational role. But more is needed on this front.

The current pandemic represents an additional challenge, but also an opportunity; an opportunity to increase our efforts towards strong national ownership and the localization of responses. Mine action should be as local as possible and as international as necessary. Let us continue to pursue our efforts in that regard. We can and must do more to empower local actors.

The sector is addressing these and other challenges.



With the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008, a majority of States agreed to ban these weapons. Sound and efficient operations at field level, for their part, are ensured by the International Mine Action Standards. They represent a unique feature in the field of conventional disarmament. The recent development of new standards guiding how to address IEDs and urban contamination testifies to the ability of the sector to adjust to an evolving context and be responsive to new challenges.

Technological innovations are also reshaping approaches to humanitarian demining and offer a real opportunity to improve safety and the efficiency of operations. For example, robotics and remotely operated vehicles are increasingly used, especially to address IEDs in urban areas. Information management tools also provide crucial support in this context. Mine action is inherently geographic, and the Information Management System for Mine Action developed by the GICHD — so called IMSMA — makes it possible to collect and visualize information related to contamination and to link such information with data related to reconstruction and development.

This last point is important. Mine action is a catalyst for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as those related to poverty reduction, food security, education, health and gender equality. It is therefore essential for national authorities to integrate mine action into broader national efforts to match humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts.

The mine action sector also contributes directly to resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, by encouraging an inclusive approach to operations with an emphasis on women's empowerment and gender-transformative impact.

Why is mine action important for the Security Council?

It is of great relevance that mine action is on the Council's agenda and not only because mine contamination is a threat to peace and security. Mine action has proven significantly to contribute to peace efforts. Colombia is a case in point. The Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo agreed in March 2015 to conduct a pilot project in humanitarian demining to strengthen confidence in the peace process. Mine action can also contribute to demobilization efforts. In Afghanistan, mine action provides meaningful and dignified employment to hundreds of former Taliban combatants, now employed by the HALO Trust, a major mine action operator.

The two treaties banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, while not yet universal, have prevented the use of these weapons by a large majority of States. New uses of mines are mainly attributable to non-State armed groups, which is a major challenge requiring innovative responses. The recent Arria Formula meeting on the threat of improvised explosive devices against peace operations is an excellent initiative in that regard. Efforts towards preventing the use of IEDs by non-State armed groups, including by ensuring better compliance with international humanitarian law by those groups, should be continued.

Mine action is needed more than ever. It saves lives and enables development. It protects communities and paves the way for peace. Through continued international cooperation, enhanced efforts at local, regional and global levels, and sustained funding, the job can be done within the current decade.

The Security Council has expressed on numerous occasions its deep concern about the terrible consequences of the use of mines and other explosive ordnance on peace and security. To echo the Secretary-General, there can be no lasting peace without mine action. And — I would add — no mine action without the contribution of all key stakeholders. The Council is one of them.



## Annex 4

### **Statement by the Provincial Programme Manager and Manager of Project RENEW, Norwegian People's Aid Viet Nam, Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh**

I thank you for the honour of briefing the Security Council today.

I was born and raised in Quang Tri province, where the former demilitarized zone was drawn to divide North and South Viet Nam from 1954 to 1975. Because of its location, we were subject to some of the heaviest bombing in world history.

In 2009, I began working in mine action. One of the first things I learned was the continuing impact of explosive ordnance. Even though the war ended nearly 46 years ago, explosive ordnance still can be found in rice fields, school yards and residential areas. I even realized that the strange objects that my friends and I found as kids when we were playing in the afternoon were actually grenades. We were lucky that we were not injured or killed then, but not everyone is that lucky.

Since the war ended in 1975, nearly 3,500 people have been killed and over 5,000 have been injured by explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Quang Tri province alone. However, thankfully there have been no accidents in the past three years, as a result of increased survey, clearance and risk education activities.

After 12 years working in mine action, I am now responsible for all the activities of Norwegian People's Aid in Quang Tri and oversee around 300 staff who spend each day travelling to different villages to search for and destroy explosive remnants of war.

Today I would like to take this opportunity to share with the Security Council and the international community some recommendations that I believe will lead to more effective and efficient implementation of mine action activities.

First, national capacity and national ownership should be increased to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of mine action results. While international technical expertise has been important to mine action in Quang Tri, the final aim has always been to support Vietnamese people in solving the ERW problem ourselves. Vietnamese expertise developed over the past 15 years is now driving operational development and management. Capacity development of national and provincial mine action authorities remains a priority for donors and Norwegian People's Aid alike, which has resulted in better coordination and monitoring of all mine action activities by national and provincial authorities. To be successful in mine action, leadership from local government and national ownership is crucial.

Secondly, all national and international mine action stakeholders should coordinate closely at every level — including operational, management and policy levels — to ensure the effectiveness of mine action operations. The successes we have seen in Quang Tri — more than 600 villages surveyed, 21 million square metres of land safely cleared, 748,000 explosive items destroyed and nearly 900,000 people, including over 300,000 women and girls, directly supported — is a clear result of close cooperation in Quang Tri among the Government, the military, national and provincial mine action authorities, international organizations and the donor community.

An example of this is the day-to-day cooperation in Quang Tri between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the military, where military personnel liaise with each village to ensure smooth implementation of our survey and clearance operations, and where military and NGO operational teams work side by side under the coordination of the provincial mine action authority. All stakeholders in the province

work towards the same strategic goals, outlined in a five-year plan by the provincial Steering Committee on Mine Action, and regularly coordinate on daily operations to ensure that everyone benefits from each other's experience. The partnership model in Quang Tri is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when mine action is coordinated well, communication is frequent among all stakeholders, data is shared openly, and everyone works towards a common goal.

Thirdly, the international community can benefit from the experience and expertise of countries with long-term impacts from explosive ordnance. While there are new conflicts, new challenges, new threats and new areas with high need for humanitarian support, we should not forget the impact of legacy weapons, such as those in Viet Nam, and the decades of experience, knowledge and skills that have been developed through working in this part of the world for so many years. Frequent reflection and documentation of lessons learned and sharing these lessons in international forums is the best way to ensure that knowledge is shared and transpired beyond just one country.

Finally, the involvement of women in all aspects of mine action should be promoted and increased. When I first worked in mine action in 2009, women were the minority, particularly in operational roles, and it was common for people to think that mine action was a job only for men. But now, Vietnamese women hold many different positions in all mine action organizations: from country directors, programme managers and team leaders to searchers and medics. I am very proud to have been part of establishing Viet Nam's first all-women clearance team working for Norwegian People's Aid at Project RENEW in Quang Tri province. We have shown that women can do this work just as well as men and that women have an important and necessary role to play in mine action and in the larger peace and security agenda.

Mine action in Quang Tri has come a long way, and by working together we have made substantial progress in reducing the threat of explosive ordnance. The support for mine action from the Government of Viet Nam, as well as international donors — including the Governments of the United States, Norway, Ireland and the United Kingdom — is critical in allowing my colleagues and me to continue to make the people and land in Quang Tri safe from explosive remnants of war. However, there is plenty of work left to be done. Many villages still require full survey and clearance, and many people are still impacted by these explosive ordnance every day. Many other provinces in Viet Nam have not yet seen the benefit of extensive mine action activities like Quang Tri province has. So I hope that mine action remains on the agenda of the international community and that the recommendations I have made are well considered, so that all people in affected countries can live safely and development is not constrained by these explosive ordnance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Viet Nam for organizing this open debate on mine action and sustaining peace. I hope that the commitment demonstrated today will continue to grow and stronger partnerships and better delivery will be achieved in resolving mine action challenges.

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**Annex 5****Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, Bui Thanh Son**

Viet Nam is honoured to assume the presidency of the Security Council for the second time during its two-year term. As this is the first time I am addressing the Council in this new capacity, I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's unwavering commitment to multilateralism, the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and to the centrality of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and its coordination of joint efforts to address global challenges. Viet Nam has been and will continue to be a reliable friend and partner, an active and responsible member of the United Nations and the international community.

I thank Secretary-General Guterres and all the briefers for their excellent, insightful presentations on this topic.

Every year, landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices claim nearly 10,000 casualties, mostly among civilians and children in conflict areas, such as Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen, but also alarmingly in places like Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and my own country, Viet Nam, where wars ended decades ago. It is a stark reminder that wounds cut deep in the aftermath of wars and create long-lasting, destabilizing effects on post-conflict peacebuilding and sustainable peace. It reminds us that peace cannot be sustained if the legacy of wars is not addressed.

Indeed, the international community has come together to address this challenge. Actions taken by Member States, the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Mine Action Service, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders have proven critical in mitigating dangers and addressing multiple challenges caused by explosive remnants of war.

The Security Council, with the adoption of its landmark resolution 2365 (2017) in 2017, has also stressed the importance of ensuring that peacekeeping operations are equipped, informed and trained to reduce such threats. All the above efforts have contributed meaningfully to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts.

However, much remains to be done. The greatest challenge, as always, is a matter of political will. Regrettably, mine action has not been accorded the level and span of attention it deserves. The contaminated areas are vast, and the number of victims in need of assistance is overwhelming. The resources allocated are dwarfed by the complexity and magnitude of the problem.

Decades of wars in Viet Nam have caused untold sorrow and left destructive, lingering effects. To this day, almost one fifth of Viet Nam's land area is still contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Clearance efforts, if continued at the current speed and resources, will take another 100 years to complete, seriously hindering our sustainable development. So clearance must be complemented by victim assistance, awareness-raising and risk education at all levels and, importantly, the creation of sustainable livelihoods so that the fruits of peace are durable and meaningful. Mine action, after all, is about protecting and caring for our people and our communities, especially the most vulnerable.

This holistic approach we take involves all stakeholders. Leading the efforts are our experienced and competent military engineers, effectively supported by national and international partners. The briefer from Viet Nam today is but one example of the importance of partnerships and the crucial role of women in mine action.

We are very grateful to the many international partners and friends, many of whom are present at today's meeting, both virtually and here in Ha Noi, for their invaluable assistance and support. Cooperation in mine clearance, including between former foes, like Viet Nam and the United States, has proven valuable in healing the wounds of war.

At the international level, mine action requires a whole-of-system, coherent and long-term approach. Stronger partnerships are vital for better delivery and sustainable results. This means enhanced support and increased resources to all stakeholders, from national Governments and regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Mine Action Center, to non-governmental organizations and those working on the ground, like Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh. Adequate and regular financing, technological assistance to help clearance and decontamination, capacity building, knowledge and experience-sharing to those affected must be stepped up.

Finally, the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, should build on resolution 2365 (2017) and expand efforts to ensure the safety of its peacekeepers, protect civilians and sustain peace. The Council should mainstream mine action in its relevant agenda items and country-specific discussions. Mine action should also be taken into account in the planning and mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding measures. The provision of adequate equipment, enhanced training and capacity building for peacekeepers must be improved in order to minimize the threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

Sustaining peace is hard, and even harder when we work alone. Viet Nam has repeatedly called for an inclusive approach across all parts of the peace spectrum and involving all stakeholders in order to sustain peace. Peace can be sustained only when a comprehensive and holistic approach is adopted, addressing the root causes of conflicts and deploying conflict prevention effectively. In this regard, as a key initiative during our presidency of the Council, the President of Viet Nam will convene a high-level open debate on 19 April on enhancing measures for conflict prevention and resolution to discuss this issue at length. We will spare no effort to forge a stronger partnership for sustainable peace.

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**Annex 6****Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland,  
Simon Coveney**

I congratulate you, Minister, on Vietnam's Presidency of the Security Council and thank you for organizing this important debate. In addition, let me congratulate you on your appointment today as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

We greatly appreciate the strong leadership of Secretary-General Guterres across all areas of disarmament. The actions that he has set out in his Agenda for Disarmament are a vital guiding reference in our work today.

Ireland also values the role of civil society in mine action and works closely with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Project Renew. I am very glad to hear them both share their experience today.

Ireland welcomes the agreement of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/8) on this important issue.

Last Sunday marked the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Yet, for too many people, the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war is not about one day. It is a grim continuing reality — a reality that shatters limbs, lives and futures, often long after the guns have been silenced.

Mines claim a victim almost every hour of every day, threatening the poorest communities and affecting their rhythm of life. They undermine post-conflict recovery and restrict vital opportunities for development. Even as we make progress in demining in many contexts, in conflict areas such as Syria and Yemen a lethal legacy continues to be sown. It is essential, therefore, that the international community and the Security Council redouble efforts to put an end to the civilian harm caused by mines and address the consequences of their use.

Ireland remains a committed partner on mine action and in the task of ridding the world of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We believe we must take action on a number of tracks.

First, the international community must live up to the existing commitments and obligations. Ireland emphasises the enduring validity of resolution 2365 (2017). The resolution and the United Nations Mine Action Strategy make clear the need for continued engagement and leadership by States and for sustained financial support.

We must continue to universalize, support and protect the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which form the cornerstone of our international efforts.

States parties adopted the Oslo Action Plan in 2019, reiterating the ambitious goal of a mine-free world by 2025. We cannot lower our collective determination to see this vision realised. We should review the continued use of mines other than anti-personnel mines in many contemporary armed conflicts and address their serious humanitarian and developmental impacts.

And on the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas, Ireland is leading consultations to develop a political declaration to deliver behavioural change and enhance the protection of civilians, which is badly needed.

My second point is that humanitarian mine action is integral to sustainable development, and the international community must continue to invest in mine action. The reduction in global funding for mine action over recent years is both worrisome and disappointing. More needs to be done to reverse this trend; otherwise, we risk leaving the job of mine action unfinished for far too long.

Ireland has a long-standing commitment to humanitarian mine action, funding programmes across four continents and 17 countries. The European Union remains one of the largest donors to global demining, research and assistance to mine victims.

Project Renew in Viet Nam is a long-standing valued partner of my country. I am glad that Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh could share her experience with us today. This work complements unexploded ordnance clearance efforts that Ireland has funded for many years in Quang Tri province. Ireland's approach is based on maximizing the benefits of demining so that communities can live in a safe environment, improving quality of life and expanding opportunities. This work helps to save lives and livelihoods. Demining opens up land for sustainable development, including agriculture, services, education and employment opportunities. Access to agricultural land for smallholder farmers increases agricultural productivity, tackling food insecurity and boosting community resilience.

My third point is that, although landmines are indiscriminate weapons, we cannot ignore their gendered impacts. For example, women and girls often assume caregiving or breadwinning roles due to injuries or deaths in their families caused by mines. We must also ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in mine action activities. And we commend the gender-responsive efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service in this regard, which has resulted in women holding half of all technical positions in Syria and three quarters of leadership roles in Colombia.

The effect of landmines on children, who are often tragically drawn to mines thinking that they are toys, is one of the most distressing aspects of this issue. Child survivors of land mines deserve to receive adequate treatment and to be able to return to a normal childhood, including their education. We must ensure that the diverse needs of all people in affected communities are taken into account in mine action.

My final point is that we must recognize the contribution that peacekeepers make to demining efforts that allow populations to return to and access land so they can safely rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Ireland recognizes that this important work also significantly contributes to keeping safe the women and men we deploy as peacekeepers.

Teams from the Irish Defence Forces support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the clearance of areas and the disposal of explosive ordnance. Their work has helped enable the re-deployment of UNDOF on the Syrian side of the area of separation since August 2018, an area heavily contaminated with explosive remnants of war and landmines. We are also working in support of the United Nations Mine Action Service to build capacity among other troop-contributing countries as well as affected States.

The norm and consensus against the use of anti-personnel mines is now embedded in the international system. That is true. However, we must continue outreach to States that manufacture and stockpile them and increase our efforts towards the universalisation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Likewise, the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will reduce harm arising from all types of mines.

Humanitarian demining and the clearance of unexploded ordnance not only protects lives and alleviates suffering; it also directly contributes to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ireland remains firm in our belief that the vision of a mine-free world is achievable — it can be done. But we must rededicate our efforts towards this important goal.



## Annex 7

### **Statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Raychelle Omamo**

May I, at the outset, congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Bui Thanh Son, on your appointment and swearing-in, earlier today, as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. As you assume this important responsibility, I assure you of cooperation with confidence that the existing friendly relations between our two countries will be further strengthened through our collaborative efforts. I also congratulate you on the assumption of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam of the presidency of the Security Council during the month of April. I assure you of Kenya's support as you deliver on the rich programme of work that you have designed.

I thank the Secretary-General and all the other the briefers for their insightful presentations on this important subject of stronger partnerships for better delivery of mine action and sustaining peace. I was truly inspired by the presentation made by Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh and the wonderful work being done by women in mine action.

I reaffirm Kenya's unequivocal support for actions that address the threats of landmines, explosive devices, improvised devices and other deadly remnants of war. We appreciate the progress that has been made in addressing this challenge pursuant to resolution 2365 (2017) and other resolutions on United Nations mine action-related activities, particularly in peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

Regrettably, explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and insecure stockpiles of weapons and ammunition continue to pose a serious security threat to humankind. We are experiencing an increasing number of civilians, including women and children, being killed or maimed by these devices, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices including by terrorists remains a major threat not only to civilian populations but also to the safety of peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian workers. In the recent past, we have witnessed a surge in the deployment of IEDs against peacekeepers. This was highlighted during the Arria Formula meeting on the protection of peacekeepers from IEDs that most Security Council members co-hosted with Kenya. In this regard, robust mine action will enhance the mobility and safety of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, thereby contributing to the protection of civilians as well as stabilization efforts and peacebuilding.

Allow me to underscore four points that Kenya believes are imperatives for successful mine action for sustainable peace.

We need to integrate mine action in all peacekeeping mandates. All peacekeepers should be properly equipped, informed and trained on mine action. At the regional level, Kenya has taken the lead to facilitate the capabilities of the African Union in counter-IED operations by leading in training and counter-IED operation.

Kenya partnered with the United Kingdom in 2015 to build the capacity of counter-IED cooperators and regional operations within the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya. Since its inception, several other international partners have joined the campaign. For instance, the Government of Germany has plans to develop a regional centre of excellence by providing key structural support needed in training.

Open to both men and women, in the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000), the institution has so far trained over 3,000 persons from 22 countries in specialized



counter-IED modules. Kenya calls on the United Nations and its States Members to support this initiative and help develop this institution into a key regional centre of excellence in Africa, where the threat of IEDs is becoming progressively menacing. International collaboration and support will enable the institution to build the required capacity for peacekeepers deploying to peace support operations in Africa.

Mine Action strategies should respond to the specific country situations and be sensitive to the regional dimensions of the threat. In this regard, regional approaches including joint operations as well as sharing of information and best practices in demining, victim assistance, community awareness, risk reduction and other related activities should be encouraged and promoted.

Increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations are central to the success of mine action. It is therefore important to reinvigorate international cooperation that emphasizes the provision of technical capacity for countries in need as well as research and development.

Mine action should be inclusive. All actors, including individuals, the private sector and civil society, should, as much as practically possible, be incorporated in mine action activities in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards. In particular, women and youth participation should be emphasized.

While our hearts go out to individuals whose lives have been impacted by these explosive devices, we pay tribute to all the men and women who continue to risk their lives in addressing this menace across the world.

**Annex 8****Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of Tunisia, Othman Jerandi**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I should like to congratulate the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current month and wish it success in carrying out its duties.

I would be remiss if I did not also congratulate Bui Thanh Son on his appointment today to the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and wish him the best in carrying out his duties as the chief diplomat of that country.

I also express our appreciation, on this World Mine Awareness Day, for today's meeting devoted to the issue of mine action.

Tunisia takes this opportunity to affirm that it is fully compliant with international conventions relating to the prohibition of mines and is actively involved in all regional and international efforts aimed at ridding the world of the landmines and explosive remnants of war, which are a lurking threat to the lives of millions of people around the world.

We also salute all the workers and activists working to eliminate mines, unexploded bombs and improvised explosive devices. They have braved the coronavirus disease pandemic to carry on humanitarian work that saves innocent civilians by clearing thousands of mine fields. In our view, that is the type of humanitarian work covered by the spirit and letter of resolution 2532 (2020).

For decades, United Nations agencies and peacekeeping forces, partner Governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities have made significant progress in following up the implementation of international conventions and United Nations demining strategies, policies and guidelines, and raising awareness of the dangers of landmines. That has contributed to peacebuilding in numerous States ravaged by war and conflict by protecting peoples, particularly children and women, from the remnants of armed conflicts to which they were in no way party to but of which they found themselves the primary victims.

We highly value all efforts, both those that strengthen the international legislative and institutional mine action framework and those involving mine action in the field. However, despite important progress, efforts continue to fall short of existing challenges. Mines continue to pose a threat to the lives of millions of people in some 60 States.

Ongoing conflicts, the proliferation of hot spots around the world, the spread of terrorism and the insistence by parties to conflicts on continuing to use mines and improvised explosive devices limit what international and regional efforts can do, and thus stand in the way of implementing peacebuilding programmes and realizing security and stability.

Those factors also hinder the responsiveness of humanitarian relief operations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to rightful beneficiaries, not to mention the return of displaced persons to their lands.

In that regard, Tunisia stresses the need for all parties to conflicts to abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, refrain from using mines and explosive devices and turn over all maps showing the locations of mines in conflict zones in order to facilitate their removal.

Our country also stresses the need to find peaceful settlements to all these conflicts, so as to lay the groundwork for building lasting and comprehensive peace in areas affected by the threat of mines and realizing the goals of the Secretary-General's "Safe ground, safe home" campaign.

Mines constitute a serious violation of human rights — primarily the rights to life, health and inviolability of the body.

We must work to provide mine survivors, particularly women and children, with the best possible care by giving them the necessary material support, psychological help and rehabilitation so they can be reintegrated into their local communities in a manner that conforms with their humanity.

Tunisia calls for strengthened international cooperation for capacity-building, support for resilience and the inclusion of affected communities in social and economic policies.

We also stress the importance of providing financial resources to respond to the mine threat and support for demining projects in order to assist affected States in meeting their international obligations and help create the necessary conditions for achieving the goal set forth in the 2014 Ottawa Landmine Convention of a mine-free world by 2025.

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**Annex 9****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

I thank you, Mr. President, for bringing us together today to discuss this pressing issue. I also want to join others in congratulating you as you take on your new duties and responsibilities as Foreign Minister. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres and the other briefers for their remarks and insights today.

A few days ago, on April 4, we commemorated the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. It was a day to reflect sombrely on the thousands killed every year by landmines. The Landmine Monitor 2020 report tells us that 5,554 people were killed or injured globally by landmines, cluster munitions remnants and other explosive remnants of war in 2019. Most of them were completely innocent civilians, and many were children. These tragic injuries and deaths are not inevitable. Landmines are a solvable problem.

President Biden believes we need to curtail the use of landmines. Now, there has been some discussion of the previous Administration's landmine policy this week, so let me speak plainly. President Biden has been clear that he intends to roll back this policy, and our Administration has begun a policy review to do just that. Meanwhile, we are working hard to address the dangers already lurking on the ground. The United Nations and the broader international community have taken great strides to address these threats.

As you well know, Mr. President, our two countries now sit together as partners in the Security Council, and that has not always been the case. However, in the 26 years since our countries normalized diplomatic relations, the United States and Viet Nam have developed a thriving partnership, which includes jointly addressing war legacies and unexploded ordnance. This collaboration has allowed Viet Nam and the United States to make enormous efforts to ensure that the Vietnamese people can be safe from explosive remnants of war.

This work has paid off. Just looking at Quang Tri province, which we heard about today, one of the most heavily contaminated areas along the former Demilitarized Zone, we made progress. There, for the past three and a half years, not a single person has died from an unexploded ordnance accident. Not one. That is not a coincidence. It is the product of the partnership that we have developed.

Viet Nam is one of more than 100 countries that have received mine action assistance from the United States since 1993. Our goals for this assistance are straightforward: protect civilians and create an environment for people to live safely. To those ends, we take a three-pronged approach: clearance, education and rehabilitation.

First, we fund efforts to neutralize these latent threats. Through those efforts, part of the United States Conventional Weapons Destruction Program, we have provided more than \$4 billion to support the clearance of landmines and improvised explosive devices and the destruction of at-risk conventional weapons in affected communities around the world. Last year alone, the United States funded conventional weapons destruction efforts in 49 countries in excess of \$259 million. And, over the past five years, we have cleared more square miles of land than the total area of New York City and Baltimore combined.

Secondly, we proactively reach out to communities to engage them with explosive ordnance risk-education programmes. We partner with teachers and educators. We spread the word through non-governmental organizations and social

media. Whatever it takes to get the message out to the people who need to hear it, we do it. From Viet Nam to Somalia, Iraq to Lebanon, these programmes have prevented countless injuries.

And thirdly, we support injury rehabilitation. From offering prosthetics to vocational training, United States-funded survivor assistance has provided essential medical and rehabilitation services to people injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Across all of our efforts, we integrate women's experiences and empower their leadership to meet our commitment to the women and peace and Security agenda. That includes the amazing work done by all-women demining groups like Ms. Linh's. And I want to take this opportunity to commend her and her organization for the amazing work that they have been able to accomplish.

All these projects are intensely collaborative. We coordinate closely with mine-affected States, implementing partners from non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Mine Action Service team and other donors through the Mine Action Support Group to promote the safe, effective and efficient operation of mine action programmes worldwide.

We are proud of our work to address preventable injuries and deaths from mines, work that is further detailed in a State Department report released this week entitled *To Walk the Earth in Safety*. These projects are grounded in over two decades of bipartisan Congressional support and they create a freer, safer and more prosperous world.

And as I mentioned earlier, we are committed to doing even more in the days and months to come. In the meantime, we welcome the United Nations support and action. Together we can save thousands of lives and address this solvable problem head-on.

## Annex 10

### Statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Erki Kodar

Very warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your appointment as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Allow me to thank Viet Nam for convening today's open debate on this important topic. Estonia shares the concerns regarding the impact of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to peacebuilding, peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. As such, this topic fully deserves the attention of the Security Council, and hopefully our discussion today will contribute to the efforts towards mitigating the threats posed by these weapons.

This debate is very timely as well because in Estonia every April we wear a blue hepatica flower to recognize our veterans who have participated in international operations. Many of them sacrificed their health during peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations; with the blue hepatica initiative we additionally support the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers.

I also wish to thank today's briefers for their insightful interventions.

Long after wars end and conflicts cease, landmines and other explosive ordnance continue to kill and maim indiscriminately. The fear of their presence prevents people from using potentially valuable land for agriculture and from rebuilding infrastructure and prevents displaced persons from returning home. As a result, economic, social and health development is hampered and further tensions, and conflicts are likely to evolve.

Estonia strongly believes that instruments of international law have an important role in protecting against the proliferation of landmines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction — also known as the Ottawa Convention — has brought about clear results on the ground through mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. Since the establishment of the treaty, more than 30 formerly contaminated countries have been declared mine-free, more than 50 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed and the official trade in anti-personnel mines has ceased to exist. In order to support the Oslo action plan for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, a European Union Council decision was adopted in February that puts forward a concrete action plan to achieve a mine-free world by 2025. We call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Ottawa Convention.

improvised explosive devices pose a growing threat. Although they might target security forces, they equally affect peacekeepers, humanitarian aid providers and civilians. Countering IEDs should not be limited to stopping or neutralizing a device once it is already in place, but should also be aimed at identifying and disrupting the networks that create and initiate IEDs. Stringent national measures and close international cooperation are key in denying terrorists and criminal groups access to weapons and explosive precursors.

We are pleased to see that gender-sensitive perspectives are increasingly taken into account when planning, implementing and monitoring mine action activities. Women, girls, boys and men are affected differently by landmines and other explosive hazards. In providing necessary support and assistance, it is therefore important to ensure that all concerns and needs of all age and gender groups are acknowledged and addressed. These may relate to priorities for clearance and post-release land use or access by survivors to health-care systems. An equally welcome development pertains to the increasing number of women now working in humanitarian demining

programs. More women need to be involved in peacebuilding activities in order to make communities work and prosper.

An area that needs more awareness-raising pertains to mine action and its environmental impact. The adverse effects of climate change, such as intense rainfalls and flooding, cause mines to move. As a result, new areas become contaminated. Certain adverse environmental impacts also derive from demining activities — clearance or removal of vegetation, soil erosion from excavations and in-situ demolition. We would encourage incorporating environmental perspectives into mine action programmes to mitigate such adverse effects.

For Estonia, mine action is a priority area in our Government's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Over the years, we have gradually increased our contributions, including financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) as well as to the clean-up of various explosive remnants of war and mine-clearance activities under bilateral and international humanitarian projects in Mali, Gaza, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan. In 2020, Estonia continued its contribution to UNMAS to support the mine action programmes in Iraq and Syria.

To conclude, mine action is a precondition for achieving peace and development in post-conflict situations. We commend the work of Viet Nam in arriving at the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2021/8, which reminds us that our work and support has to continue, since landmines and explosive remnants of war remain a threat in many parts of the world.



## Annex 11

### Statement by the Vice-Minister and Secretary (West) of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, Vikas Swarup

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Bui Thanh Son, on your appointment as the Foreign Minister of Vietnam. Allow me to also join others in extending best wishes to you and your delegation for a successful presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to your delegation for organizing today's open debate on this very important issue. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; Ms. Michelle Yeoh, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Goodwill Ambassador; and Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, Provincial Programme Manager and Manager of project renew, the all-women demining team in Viet Nam, for their briefings.

General Assembly and Security Council resolutions have recognized the relevance of mine action across the pillars of peace and security, humanitarian issues, human rights and development. India supports the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UNDP and other agencies that have been working in conflict zones across the world. UNMAS's mine action has remained pivotal to the safety and security of our peacekeepers.

It is a matter of deep concern that terrorist groups such as Da'esh, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Al-Nusra Front have resorted to landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as low-cost and effective options to spread terror and threaten innocent civilians. We are also witnessing a similar trend in Mali, where peacekeepers have been targeted by IEDs. Such usage has only increased; we need to strongly condemn and take effective measures to combat that trend. The countries affected by landmines, particularly those in conflict situations, require assistance. We need to provide assistance without politicizing the issue, since it is the people who suffer from this menace.

India is fully committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and is a signatory to all five of its Protocols. We attach high priority to the full implementation and universalization of Amended Protocol II, as it strikes the right balance between the humanitarian concerns and legitimate defence requirements of States, particularly those with long borders. We have a moratorium on the export and transfer of landmines and are committed to reducing the dependence on anti-personnel mines (APMs). We believe that the availability of militarily effective alternative technologies that are also cost-effective can help facilitate the goal of complete elimination of APMs.

India has enacted the Right of Persons with Disability Act, 2016, which addresses the concerns of persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors. In October 2018, the India for Humanity initiative was launched as a part of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th anniversary celebrations, with a focus on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of compassion and service to humanity. Under that initiative, 13 artificial limb fitment camps have been held by India in 12 countries and more than 6,500 artificial limbs have been fitted, mainly in Asia and Africa. We are pleased to convey that the limb fitment camps, which aim to provide for the physical, economic and social rehabilitation of the affected persons and help them regain their mobility and dignity, have now been extended up to March 2023. In that context, we acknowledge the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti Jaipur (2007) association, led by Mr. D.R. Mehta, for contributing the Jaipur foot artificial limb for thousands affected by disabilities as a result of conflicts and landmines.

India is a leading contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations and has extended assistance towards international demining and rehabilitation

efforts. We have also undertaken specialist training on counter-IED, bomb disposal and demining operations with numerous partner countries, including Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia and Uzbekistan. Our 12-member team of experts participated in the joint counter-explosive threat task force training exercise Ardent Defender 2019 in Ontario, Canada. Some 130 personnel from 13 African States participated in AFINDEX, a multinational exercise on demining and unexploded ordinance held in India in March 2019. In addition to providing training in demining, India also provided seven demining teams to clear landmines in the northern part of Sri Lanka in 2010, which helped facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to rebuild their lives.

We remain willing to share our best practices with Member States and the United Nations with respect to minimizing damage resulting from IED development and proliferation, and stand ready to contribute to capacity-building, victim assistance and victim rehabilitation.

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**Annex 12****Statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway,  
Jens Frølich Holte**

I thank Viet Nam for holding a debate on this very important issue, as well as the briefers for their valuable input. I congratulate you, Foreign Minister Son, on your new position. Chairing this important meeting on the first day in the job is a great start.

There is no acceptable use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. By design, they kill and maim indiscriminately. Whether they be civilians or combatants, children or soldiers, men or women, in conflict or post-conflict, an anti-personnel landmine does not differentiate when its deadly payload is unleashed on unsuspecting victims. In fact, year after year the numbers show that children pay the highest price. They are disproportionately harmed by landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Mines and cluster munitions also hinder the return of refugees. They render agricultural land and grazing areas unusable, increasing the risk of food insecurity and denying people their livelihoods. They terrorize entire communities, often for decades. They tear apart families and leave victims in need of lifelong assistance. Improvised landmines and explosive devices in particular pose a severe threat to peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations. Mine action is vital.

Resolution 2365 (2017) acknowledged that anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war merit special attention from the Security Council. They have a destabilizing effect on peace and security, amplify the effects of conflict, pose obstacles to conflict resolution and the provision of humanitarian relief and threaten peacekeeping personnel. That is why it has long been a humanitarian priority for Norway to clear mines and explosive remnants of war and provide risk education to affected populations.

In our experience, successful mine action requires four things: first, full implementation of the obligation not to use anti-personnel mines; secondly, strong national ownership and commitment to mine action — it is almost impossible to make progress without political will; thirdly, international cooperation and support, including from donors, mine operators, civil society, the United Nations and regional organizations; and, fourthly, effective, targeted mine action programmes that are sensitive to gender, age and disability and give adequate consideration to the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities. The importance of that is also recognized in the Oslo Action Plan on mine action.

In addition, mine risk education plays an important role in protecting civilians from explosions, especially in areas where hostilities are ongoing or clearance activities have not yet been completed. Such programmes must be context-specific and integrated into wider humanitarian, protection and mine-clearance efforts. Survivors and victims must be heard.

Indeed, mine action can open up new opportunities for participation and empowerment, particularly for women. Ensuring the inclusion of women in clearance programmes will benefit both the programme itself and society at large.

Norway consistently argues in favour of effectual multilateral disarmament treaties. In our view, the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention is critical to the success of global mine action. Since its adoption in Oslo in 1997, the Convention has become one of the most successful disarmament treaties. There are 164 States parties and many more countries are observing the norm against use established by the Convention, including use of improvised anti-personnel mines. Likewise,

the Convention on Cluster Munitions is a key instrument to protect people from unexploded ordnance. We call on States that have not yet acceded to those Conventions to do so as a matter of urgency.

Since the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention entered into force, there has been a steady decline in the number of casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war, with a global low in 2013. However, some countries affected by armed conflict have seen a disproportionate increase. They include Syria, Nigeria and, in particular, Afghanistan, which experiences at least one casualty every day. In those areas, much of the increase is due to the use of new landmines, most significantly the use of improvised land mines by non-State actors. There is a pressing need to find ways to counter that deadly trend.

As we have heard today, for many people the scourge of landmines is a horrific daily reality. We must therefore remain steadfast in our focus. As the Security Council, there are a few practical steps that we can take. We must reaffirm the obligation of all not to use anti-personnel mines. We must condemn the illegal use, stockpiling, production and transfer of such mines, and we must hold those responsible for such activities to account.

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**Annex 13****Statement by the Minister of State with the Responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Keisal Peters**

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Minister, on assuming your new position and commending the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for convening this timely and important discussion. We also thank the briefers for leading this fruitful exchange.

Landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other explosive remnants of war are deadly scourges that threaten far too many lives and livelihoods, while undermining the long-term stability, security and development of countries. Coordinated action is needed by all parties to address the risks posed to civilian populations, humanitarian workers, peacekeeping personnel and the institutions and infrastructure necessary for viable States.

At a time when the cross-border challenges of terrorism, organized crime, health crises and climate change bear disproportionately on vulnerable States and regions, there is an urgent need for the peace and security, humanitarian and development considerations of mine action to be taken fully into account. Mine action runs across this triple nexus by facilitating freedom of movement for security actors, including peacekeeping personnel, and supporting effective mandate delivery; streamlining the delivery of humanitarian assistance and allowing safe and voluntary returns of refugees and displaced persons; and facilitating socioeconomic activities, including agriculture, in areas recovered from landmines, and enabling communities affected by explosive ordnance to fully participate in those activities. Such integration is essential to peacebuilding.

Mine action serves as a vehicle for promoting effective civil-military cooperation in many theatres of operation. As has been the case in Colombia, mine action can provide critical support to peace processes and deliver rapid peace dividends as the threat of explosive ordnance is removed from the lives of individuals and communities, paving the way for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends the United Nations Mine Action Service for its leading role in providing technical and financial assistance to affected countries in areas such as mine risk education, victim assistance, weapons and ammunition management and survey and clearance operations. We also hail the support offered to various peacekeeping missions to ensure that they are well equipped with the necessary expertise and resources to detect, mitigate and counter such threats.

In all circumstances, these capacities should be transferred to host countries to strengthen national ownership over explosive ordnance. Countries from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa and across the Middle East will benefit immensely when national institutions are able to assume full responsibility for mine action.

Core competencies in areas such as ammunition stockpile management and explosive ordnance disposal should be incorporated into security sector reform programmes, and modern technologies that enhance explosive ordnance awareness and facilitate route clearance should be transferred to affected States.

All States and the regional and subregional organizations within which they are situated must work together diligently to improve transparency and accountability across supply lines so as to manage the traceability of explosive ordnance and to minimize their illegal transfer across porous borders. Our delegation also emphasizes the importance of information-sharing at the regional and international levels to

dismantle complex networks of terrorism and transnational organized crime that facilitate illicit cross-border flows of explosive ordnance. In that regard, we hail the crucial roles of INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization's Global Shield programme in mitigating such threats.

The twenty-first century is marked by many emergent and unexpected challenges that threaten our multilateral system. As we grapple with the residual risks of landmines and other deadly remnants of war, let us renew our commitment to upholding the principles of international law and strengthen the sovereign authorities of States upon which our collective security is built.

## Annex 14

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese]

At the outset, I wish to extend warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your appointment as Foreign Minister of Viet Nam, and I welcome you to this meeting. I also appreciate the work done by Viet Nam as President of the Council. China thanks Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. I have also listened to the statements by Ms. Michelle Yeoh, Ambassador Toscano and Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh.

At present, the international security landscape is complex and grim, evidenced by intensifying geopolitical competition among major Powers, incessant outbreaks of regional conflicts and hotspot issues and the spread of terrorism. The humanitarian consequences of the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons are more salient than before. Among them, landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERWs) and improvised explosive devices threaten the safety and security of personnel, hinder humanitarian development activities, disrupt the normal life of local communities and create obstacles to achieving lasting peace and development in conflict areas.

For many years, the international community has given importance to the issue of arms control for conventional weapons, which is regarded as disarmament that saves lives by Secretary-General Guterres in his agenda for disarmament. The international community has taken sustained action on the landmine dossier and achieved good results. In some countries and regions where landmine contamination was prevalent, the situation has been alleviated. That said, the number of landmine casualties remains high. Over the past two years, tens of thousands of people have been killed or maimed. As we speak, there are still nearly 30 countries whose populations still face landmine risks, especially Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and Yemen. In South Sudan, Mali, Western Sahara and other peacekeeping mission areas, United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian workers are also exposed to the safety and security threats of explosives, such as landmines. Therefore, the international community should continue to step up its efforts. To that end, I would like to emphasize the following.

First, we should do our utmost to ensure the safety of civilians, which is the priority of international mine action. We should uphold the principle of national ownership, letting the countries concerned shoulder the primary responsibility for mine action. The international community should be proactive in helping the countries concerned to raise landmine awareness, upgrade demining technology, control explosive supply chains and strengthen integrated mine clearance capacity so as to reduce the overall safety risks of landmines to the civilian population. The parties concerned must do their level best to keep a record of the mines laid and, at the end of hostilities, remove them promptly or take other measures to protect civilians from harm. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation and assistance and actively help landmine-affected countries build up their own capacity to ensure sustained mine action. Countries that have left ERWs in other countries should shoulder their due historical responsibility and provide the necessary support for clearance and destruction.

China is actively engaged in international humanitarian demining assistance and cooperation. The Chinese Government has, through donations, the provision of equipment, training programmes and field guidance, provided humanitarian demining assistance totalling over ¥100 million to more than 40 countries. China has also trained more than 1,000 professional demining technicians. In September 2015, President Xi Jinping announced at the United Nations Leaders' Summit on



Peacekeeping that China would undertake 10 demining assistance projects in the next five years. Since then, China has carried out 24 demining assistance projects, with the total exceeding ¥55 million, meeting and surpassing the targets ahead of schedule. Last year, China assisted Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic with ¥9.5 million in mine detection and clearance equipment and humanitarian supplies.

Secondly, the United Nations must play an active role. Secretary-General Guterres once said that peace without mine action is incomplete peace. Mine action has become an important part of United Nations peace operations. Member States and the Secretariat should upgrade demining equipment used in peacekeeping operations, provide mine clearance training and improve the capacity of peacekeeping operations to help host countries in mine action. This will also contribute to the reduction of landmine threats to peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

We should attach great importance to the disposal of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). China has sent experts to participate in the review and revision of the international mine action standards. As the co-Chair of the United Nations working group on IED disposal standards, China worked along with experts from other countries to study and formulate the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards. We hope that this will provide useful reference information to countries around the world. China accords attention to addressing the humanitarian concerns resulting from the indiscriminate use of IEDs by non-State actors. China supports the formulation of sensible and viable solutions under the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

We should also give full play to the role of peacekeeping operations in mine clearance. Chinese peacekeepers have been present in the mission area in Lebanon since 2006. To date, they have found and removed more than 10,000 landmines and explosives. They are known for their exceptional performance in demining operations, with zero casualties, zero accidents, the fastest speeds and the largest quantity of mines and explosives cleared. We also maintained the safety and security of peacekeepers and provided demining and security training to peacekeepers from multiple countries.

Thirdly, we should adhere to the balanced approach principle. It is necessary to properly address the humanitarian concerns and give consideration to the legitimate military security needs of various countries on the basis of the respective security environment and the differences in military strength. China is a State party to the Amended Protocol on Landmines of the CCW. China strictly abides by the provisions pertaining to the restrictions on the production and use of landmines and submits its national compliance report to the Conference of States Parties to the Protocol every year. China subscribes to the purposes of the Ottawa Convention and supports the ultimate goal of a comprehensive landmine ban. China maintains good communication and cooperation with the States Parties to the Convention.

As a former victim, China empathizes with the humanitarian concerns caused by landmines, ERWs and IEDs. We will continue to rigorously fulfil relevant international obligations and provide assistance where we can to developing countries and people who have been affected. We stand ready to work with the international community and play a constructive role in addressing the security and humanitarian risks caused by the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons, including landmines.

**Annex 15****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

I too would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and to thank you for organizing this important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and all the briefers for their extremely enlightening interventions.

Anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war still claim a victim every two hours in the world. This is compounded by the increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are taking an increasingly deadly toll. IEDs have been responsible for the largest number of civilian deaths caused by explosive weapons in the past decade. Civilians, local forces and troop contributors face these scourges of modern conflict on a daily basis. Anti-personnel mines and IEDs sow death and dismemberment, killing at random long after they have been planted, and are likely to strike civilians, as well as soldiers.

The daily work of civilian and military deminers protects the most vulnerable populations. It also helps to create the security conditions that allow peacekeepers to deploy in better conditions and humanitarian personnel to access conflict zones. Their action is indispensable, not only for the return of displaced populations and refugees, but also for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction.

We face complex challenges. New conflicts are intense, asymmetric, protracted and urban. The threat of improvised explosive devices is increasing. That is why we must equip the actors on the ground with the necessary operational resources. Peace operations are regularly in mourning. Their mobility and, therefore, their ability to carry out their missions are hampered. They have therefore developed new technologies, in particular jamming systems. Medical evacuations have also become faster, thanks to decision-making closer to the operational levels.

We also need to step up our efforts in terms of training troops and raising awareness. We must also combat networks, which requires coordinated action at the national and regional levels. That also requires measures to prevent and combat the illicit acquisition of components, explosives and materials that can be used to make improvised explosive devices. These efforts are an essential part of our action, and must be combined with clearance and security programmes to protect civilian populations.

I would like to acknowledge the remarkable work of the United Nations Mine Action Service and pay tribute to all the specialized non-governmental organizations, which work tirelessly in extremely dangerous areas. At the national level, France supports demining programs, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, in close cooperation with a large number of partners.

The strengthening of resources on the ground must go hand in hand with the implementation of a universal legal framework. The protection of civilian populations against the indiscriminate effects of certain means of warfare is a fundamental obligation, which was recalled in the Ottawa Convention and reinforced by the Oslo Convention. For over 20 years, France has been firmly committed to the implementation and universalization of these conventions.

Every day, lives are shattered because of a misstep. Time is of the essence in the face of the ever-increasing number of victims caused by these weapons. It is our moral, political and legal responsibility. Rest assured of France's firm commitment to that end.

**Annex 16****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

On behalf of Mexico, we congratulate you, Mr. President, on your appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, whom we thank for convening this debate on a major international security issue, as well as the Secretary-General for his comments, and the speakers who have enriched the debate with their testimonies, together with the considerations of ministers and high-level officials.

Anti-personnel landmines, like other explosive remnants of war, are designed to injure, maim or kill, and they lie dormant for decades underground. Mine action is crucial to facilitate humanitarian responses, contribute to sustainable peace and development, and facilitate the safe passage of refugees and displaced persons, among others.

Anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war are often considered a thing of the past. This is false; at least 55 States — more than a quarter of the members of the Organization — are still under threat from these devices. In 2020, the United Nations reported that 7,000 civilians were victims of anti-personnel landmines. Many of these victims were children. These devices are also a cause of death for United Nations personnel in peace operations and humanitarian missions, as we have heard.

It is the responsibility of the Council to favour decisions aimed at reducing suffering and protecting civilians everywhere. We must support and strengthen the efforts of peace operations to support demining efforts and ensure that the parties to conflicts assume their responsibility to mitigate the risks of explosive remnants of war. To that end, it is essential to have the necessary equipment and training in peace operations.

We express our support for the implementation of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019-2023 and the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service, including support to peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We also recognize the International Committee of the Red Cross and the various civil society organizations, as well as regional organizations that collaborate in support of States and affected populations on disarmament, demining, victim care and risk education, to name a few of their valuable contributions.

We call on all parties to armed conflict to put an end to the use of indiscriminate weapons. Victim-activated weapons and weapons of indiscriminate effect do not distinguish between military and civilian targets, and consequently, their use is inadmissible under international humanitarian law.

Mexico upholds the integrity of international humanitarian law, and therefore, strongly condemns the use of anti-personnel landmines by any actor and under any circumstances.

My country has always advocated for the prohibition and elimination of those weapons. For decades, we pushed for the respective negotiations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention as part of the core group.

The norm established by the Ottawa Convention has already been accepted by 164 States, and even those States that are not parties to the Convention have made political commitments not to use that type of weapon.

Since 1997, and thanks to the Ottawa Convention, there has been clear and significant progress towards a world free of anti-personnel landmines. As we have heard, their production has been reduced, exports have virtually ceased, vast affected areas have been cleared and some 53 million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed.

In this regard, we urge those States that have not yet done so to declare and implement a moratorium on the production, use and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. At the same time, we invite those States that have not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention to seriously consider doing so.

Mexico welcomes the steps that have been taken to attack this scourge in the Americas, especially since the Organization of American States set the goal of making the Western Hemisphere an Anti-Personnel Landmine-Free Zone in 1996. We have supported practically all regional demining processes, and recently, we contributed financial resources to the efforts of Colombia, the most affected country in the region, to help it rid its territory of anti-personnel landmines.

As part of the pre-deployment training courses offered by Mexico's Joint Training Centre for Peace Operations, training is provided on preventing and dealing with anti-personnel landmines.

However, Mr. President, despite the progress made, as you have pointed out, there is still much to be done to eliminate the problem, which is why today's debate is timely, as it gives us the opportunity to add to and strengthen commitments. A world without explosive remnants of war will be much safer for everyone.

**Annex 17****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Viet Nam's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April 2021.

As the Secretary-General so aptly mentioned on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April, it is time to remember how far we have come in raising awareness of the dangers of mines and to recommit ourselves to the goal of a mine-free world.

That is why I would like to thank Viet Nam for having initiated this high-level debate, the importance of which is no longer in question, as the problem of combating landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices is still a matter of great concern. According to the Landmine Monitor report published in November 2020, 5,554 mine victims were recorded in 2019, 80 per cent of whom were civilians, with 43 per cent children.

Indeed, mines and improvised explosive devices, as evidenced by the hot news items, continue to claim many victims around the world, including civilian and military personnel involved in stabilization operations. They considerably hinder the development of human activities and the implementation of sustainable development programmes, in particular in regions affected by conflict.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Stefano Toscano and Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, for their brilliant briefings on this topic.

While we pay tribute to the United Nations peacekeepers who are carrying out their missions, despite the current pandemic, it must be recognized that those missions operate under difficult conditions in areas often lacking roads or other transportation infrastructure and with porous borders. It is in this context that armed non-State actors have intensified their attacks with mines and other improvised explosive devices, threatening the safety of populations, especially women, children and humanitarian workers.

My country shares the view of the Secretary-General, rightly set out in his report entitled "Comprehensive approach to mine action" (S/2018/623), that the obligations upon parties to a conflict include the need to mitigate the risk posed to civilians by explosive devices. It is therefore essential to include mine clearance in ceasefires and peace agreements as integral steps for achieving successful results.

Likewise, if this goal is to be achieved, it is urgent that States and all stakeholders work to ensure the universalization and full implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Even though the number of victims of anti-personnel mines around the world has seen a notable decrease, this phenomenon still remains prevalent. The recent attacks against Blue Helmets in Mali remind us that the proliferation of these devices still constitutes a serious danger in other parts of the world, in particular the central Sahel, which is among the worst-affected areas today, despite the adoption of several conventions and other instruments, such as resolution 2365 (2017).

For its part, my country, the Niger, ratified the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines in March 1999. Given our experience of armed rebellions from 1990 to 2000, we established, in 1994, a National Commission for the Collection of

Illicit Weapons and Humanitarian Demining, to implement an emergency national mine-action and victim-support programme.

Moreover, faced with intensified terrorist activities in the Sahel region and Lake Chad basin over recent years, the Niger has stepped up its demining actions, making it possible to detect the presence of a field of APID 51-type mines, of an estimated 2,400 square metres, around the Madama advanced military post. A technical survey carried out in 2014 delineated and confirmed major minefields. At that time, an area adjacent to the first was found to contain a mixture of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. The Commission therefore deployed its teams in 2014 to begin the clearance process. It was because of these mines that a vehicle transporting the members of a polling station for the elections just held in my country hit a mine, killing seven of its occupants.

Against this backdrop, my delegation would like to make the following recommendations.

Just as we have done for other thematic issues, we must commit to capacity-building and more sustained action by the Security Council by systematically integrating mine action into the mandates in peacekeeping operations, as well as into the planning of humanitarian and development operations at the national and international levels alike.

We must also work to implement the recommendations in the various reports of the Secretary-General on this subject, in particular those regarding improving the sharing of information and technology, improving emergency-response capacity, supporting national mine-action capacities and stepping up advocacy on the implementation of relevant legal instruments, but also, and most particularly, on responding to the issue of persistent underfunding in terms of assistance to countries in the throes of these issues, including compensation for survivors.

In conclusion, it is essential to strengthen regional and international cooperation and coordination, given the multiple actors involved, to achieve more effective mine action and better meet the needs of the communities and countries most affected. Equally important is capacity-building for States to provide an adequate level of care, both physical and psychosocial, to soldiers and mine-affected populations and to ensure their reintegration, as stated in the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on this matter.

## Annex 18

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Bui Thanh Son on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam and wishing to him every success in this new capacity. Let me assure you, Sir, that you can count on the full support of the Russian Federation.

We appreciate the efforts of the Vietnamese presidency in promoting such a crucial topic as mine action. We commend the highly professional efforts of Viet Nam's negotiating team and its transparent approach, which aimed to take into account the opinions of all Security Council members. Thanks to this approach, we were able to agree on a draft presidential statement for adoption today (S/PRST/2021/8). This is a major achievement by Vietnamese diplomacy and makes a significant contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We thank the Secretary-General and the other speakers for their meaningful briefings.

Historically, Russia has paid great attention to the issue of demining, which is especially relevant in the context of resolving regional crises and overcoming their after-effects, as well as countering terrorism. Many conflict-affected countries have significant demand for professional assistance in the area of mine action. They need it in order to make a full-fledged transition to peaceful life and restore their economy and infrastructure.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) plays an important role in global demining efforts. UNMAS is active in the framework of the existing United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions. It also provides capacity-building assistance to States at their request. Russian experts took part in the development of international standards for countering the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), conducted under the auspices of UNMAS. We provide all sorts of support, including financial, to the activities of the Service.

Russia is implementing robust measures aimed at achieving a world free of mines. As for countering the mine threat, we successfully implement our approach to this issue within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996. The results of our work on this track are presented in our annual national reviews under the CCW.

Furthermore, we help our partners enhance their technical and operational capacities, because it is States that bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of their people.

Mine action in Syria is among our priorities. Syria needs it in order to restore its infrastructure and ensure the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. Let me recall that, in 2016 and 2017, Russian engineering troops carried out mine clearance in Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and, twice, in Palmyra. We continue to assist Syrians in mine and explosive clearance in the areas liberated from terrorists and extremists. In total, Russian military experts demined over 6,500 hectares of Syrian land and over 17,000 facilities, defusing over 105, 000 explosive objects.

Taking into account the scale of the mine action that needs to be carried out in Syria, we are also working to boost international efforts. In particular, we are closely engaged with UNMAS on this front. Russia's contribution to UNMAS made



it possible for the Service to carry out a pilot project on humanitarian demining in Syria. We call on other international donors to join that initiative.

Since October 2018, Russian engineering troops have been conducting mine clearance on the territory of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Since the beginning of this year, the consolidated team of experts from Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations has been working on humanitarian demining in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We are paying increased attention to developing international cooperation in this area. We are sharing best practices with military sappers, initially from Indonesia, Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We also maintain close contacts with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

From 25 to 28 May 2021, Moscow will host the fourth international conference devoted to the issues of humanitarian demining and countering the use of IEDs. We invite all Member States to participate in it.

Since 2014, the International Mine Action Centre of the Russian Armed Forces has been training specialists in landmine clearance and detecting and defusing various types of mines and IEDs, operators of mobile robotic units, and employees of the mine-detection service. The Centre has its affiliated branches in Syria and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and it stands ready to exchange professional expertise with any interested parties.

These systematic efforts constitute Russia's practical contribution to the implementation of resolution 2365 (2017). We will take further action to step up these efforts.

**Annex 19****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations**

Thank you, Sir, for hosting today's open debate on this important issue.

As our briefers have highlighted, mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pose grievous threats in conflict-affected countries around the world, impacting hundreds of thousands of lives. The United Kingdom is committed to tackling this threat.

Over the past three years, the United Kingdom has committed more than \$65 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service and has invested more than \$165 million through the Global Mine Action Programme 2. By December 2020, that Programme had cleared and confirmed safe nearly 400 million square metres of land, delivered risk education to over 3.1 million people in communities affected by mines and supported States in improving their own national coordination efforts.

Looking forward, there are three areas where more can be done.

First, there is a significant funding gap in mine action efforts. The United Kingdom is funding research into innovative financing options, and we look forward to sharing conclusions with interested States and other stakeholders.

Secondly, we support more research on how to prioritize clearance efforts to ensure programmes are targeted in a way that maximizes the benefit to people affected by mines and explosive ordnance, and supports development goals.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is committed to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its humanitarian goals. We call on States not already party to the Convention to accede to it without delay.

Turning to the threat of IEDs, we can begin to tackle the threat of IEDs before they emerge by disrupting the networks that provide the raw materials and technical know-how used to perpetrate IED attacks. In 2019, the Security Council acted to limit the transfer of IED components to Somalia following the rise in attacks by Al-Shabaab. That demonstrated the effectiveness of a coherent Security Council approach exploiting different tools available.

Finally, in terms of protecting peacekeepers, it is important that peacekeepers be armed with the right skills and appropriate equipment, and the United Kingdom continues to work with troop-contributing countries to build awareness and develop counter-IED skills through targeted training.

It is vital that those working in the field have an accurate picture of the nature of the IED threat in their operating environment, so that peacekeepers are able to mitigate the risks. Effective intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination are key, including sharing information with humanitarian and civilian actors.

## Annex 20

### Statement by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Adela Raz

Allow me to first congratulate His Excellency Mr. Bui Thanh Son on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and wish him success in the fulfilment of his duties. I also congratulate Viet Nam on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and for presenting a substantial and timely agenda.

I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres and all the distinguished briefers for joining us today and providing insightful remarks on a topic that is of vital relevance for international peace and security and of special importance to the Afghan people.

As participants know, Afghanistan has suffered the effects of imposed conflicts since the end of the 1970s. These conflicts have caused, and continue to cause, significant loss of life and destruction — shaking our day-to-day with unexpected, improvised explosions while also spreading fear and insecurity, including through the deadly landmines and remnants of war spread out throughout our territory. Only last year, combined improvised explosive device (IED) attacks and explosions from landmines and remnants of war led to over 3,400 casualties, including over 1,200 deaths. Adding to the tragedy, children have been disproportionately affected by the effects of explosive remnants of war, accounting for 80 per cent of the 400 casualties of such devices in 2020.

IEDs caused a third of all civilian casualties in the country. They kill without distinction among Government employees, soldiers, students, men, women or children. They attack all of us and force our population to live in fear over where the next attack will take place. Their use constitutes a direct violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and it must immediately stop.

The use of IEDs also reflects the need for better coordinated regional efforts to target terrorist groups and the overall movement of their resources. Today many of these groups share tools, expertise and materials to achieve their nefarious objectives. This includes the trafficking of weapons, chemical precursors and other materials used to make and enhance the capabilities of IEDs. Efforts, including information sharing and border controls, must be strengthened to ensure that these materials and other resources are not able to freely move within our region.

On the issue of landmines and explosive remnants of war, the most recent statistics show that 3,918 identified hazards remain in the country. As a result, 1,530 communities are threatened by these artefacts, which also affect communities by delaying the construction of roads, transmission lines and other key infrastructure that could assist in the development of affected regions. While the challenge before us remains immense, significant progress has been made. The Afghan Directorate for Mine Action Coordination, in cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, has devoted enormous effort and achieved joint success throughout the country.

Since the start of our work together in 1989, we have effectively cleared close to 80 per cent of all known hazardous areas in Afghanistan, totalling over 3,200 square kilometres. In 2020 alone, we cleared 14 square kilometres, to the benefit of 122 at-risk communities. These efforts closely follow a detailed plan of action, which aims to achieve mine-free status by 2023. We are sparing no effort in working with dedication to meet this objective, and we thank our friends and partners in the international community for all their support in this regard.

In addition to clearing hazardous objects, we have also delivered risk education, which teaches preventative measures and safe behaviours when encountering landmines and explosive ordnance and remnants of war. For example, the Ministry of Education has implemented mine-prevention programmes in Government schools throughout the country. Overall, these programmes have benefited more than 8 million people.

Afghanistan has also worked to promote and protect the rights of those affected by landmines and explosive ordnances. For instance, the State Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled Affairs has, with international partners, developed the National Disability and Inclusion Strategy for 2020-2030. This Strategy is closely aligned with relevant international conventions and focuses on assistance to victims and the social inclusion of all those affected. We are committed to ensuring its successful implementation in the years to come.

I also want to highlight the incredible and brave work of our all-women demining team. The team successfully cleared landmines from Bamyan province and, as a result, the province was declared free from mines in 2019. This team is just one example of the national unity for the cause of not only peace but also a sustainable new Afghanistan that can prosper and guarantee the safety of all its citizens. They represent the tenacity, fearlessness and confidence that Afghan women bring to all aspects of peacemaking and nation-building. We are proud of them and we hope to reward their sacrifice with the success of our efforts for sustainable peace.

Finally, increased hostilities on the ground and the long-term socioeconomic effects of conflict have underscored two things with regard to the fight against IEDs and our mine-action objectives. First, with only two years left until the 2023 deadline, increased funding is critical to achieving our demining objective. International funding for Afghanistan's mine-action activities has dropped to 28 per cent of what it used to be in 2011, greatly impacting our ability to meet our annual mine-clearance targets. Being able to achieve mine-free status is a vital element for post-peace development and we hope that our generous international donors and friends, who have already given so much for Afghanistan, will help us reach our shared objective.

Secondly, achieving an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned sustainable peace remains the most important element to stop IED attacks and sustainably demine our country. Only an end to hostilities will allow us to maximize our internal security efforts against other terrorist groups that continue to operate and ensure the effective elimination of remaining explosive artefacts. Further, a comprehensive ceasefire would allow us to focus on activities, such as demining, that can create an environment conducive to the peace, development and growth of our country. Peace requires more than a political agreement and we hope that the Taliban also understands the importance of this.

To close, I once again reiterate Afghanistan's immense gratitude to our friends and international partners who continue to support our efforts for peace and a more secure Afghanistan. I also reiterate our thanks to the United Nations Mine Action Service and all donors who have provided support, both technical and financial, to help Afghanistan achieve a safer and more prosperous mine-free future.

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**Annex 21****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations, Maria de Jesus dos Reis Ferreira**

First of all, we would like to commend Viet Nam, in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of April, for calling this timely open debate of paramount importance on “Mine action and peacekeeping: stronger partnerships for better delivery”.

In the same vein, we take this opportunity to wish you, Sir, success in your presidency of the Council during the current month. We also express our thanks to the briefers for their presentations and to all Member States participating in this important meeting.

Despite progress in addressing the threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including advances in the universalization and implementation of international instruments to combat them, explosive weapons continue to pose significant threats to civilians, parents and children, peacekeepers and aid workers during conflicts and long after they end, in many countries around the world. Mine action has become a nexus among humanitarian action, peace and security, and development, as well as a cornerstone for conflict prevention.

In this sense, the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023 guides the activities of the United Nations at the global and national levels to ensure that it responds to the specific needs and priorities of the context, while ensuring the integration of action against mines in broader humanitarian, human rights, peace and security, and development responses.

Angola believes that action against mines is crucial for the maintenance and consolidation of peace, since programmes in these areas allow the reconstruction of important infrastructure, such as agricultural fields, electricity-transmission lines, roads, railways and water pipelines; promote sustainable development; and prevent mines and IEDs from being used by terrorists and armed groups.

It is important to mention that it is only after extensive demining that land can be used for agriculture and cattle raising, children can return to school and water- and electricity-supply projects can be implemented or restored.

Regarding the obstacles to approaching mine action at the global, regional and national levels, Angola encourages all measures to improve partnership and cooperation between the United Nations and Member States at the national, regional and international levels in the field of mine action in order to enhance coordination and synergies among developing countries, thematic issues and specific challenges. Priorities to strengthen partnerships should include expanding collaboration in multisectoral assistance for survivors and their communities.

To this end, we take good note that, in 2021, the United Nations is promoting the efforts of the mine action sector under the theme “Perseverance, Partnership, Progress”. The perseverance of the United Nations, in close partnership with the African Union and the main mine-action partners, is contributing to progress in reducing the threat posed by explosive weapons. This work is being carried out despite the continuing challenges of conflict, as well as the coronavirus disease pandemic.

It is important to remember that Angola still has vast areas of territory contaminated by explosive devices, the result of three distinct phases of armed conflict from 1961 to 2002. From the national point of view, in our country the main

achievements and challenges in acting to mitigate the threat mines pose to civilians are as follows.

Angola launched its National Mine Action Strategy 2020–2025 and a work plan for the implementation of article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, both developed under the leadership of the National Intersectoral Commission on Demining and Humanitarian Assistance, with clear goals for land release and demining completion by 2025.

Continuous improvement has also been made in information management, with the database being reconciled and updated in 2019 and its quality assured. However, although funding increased in 2019 after years of decline, Angola still lacks the necessary funding or capacity to meet its compensation goals.

Angola recorded 22 deaths and 41 injuries due to 30 accidents with unexploded ordnance last year, according to data from the Angolan Executive Demining Commission.

Angola is party to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, also known as the Ottawa Convention, as well as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

In 2002, Angola ratified the Ottawa Convention, which came into force a year later, committing us to destroying all anti-personnel mines by the end of 2012 at the latest. However, in March 2017 we requested an extension until 31 December 2025. In our 2017 extension request, Angola indicated the existence of 1,465 areas, covering a total of 221,409,679 square metres, yet to be demined.

Education and awareness-raising campaigns have been important solutions for reducing the risk of suffering for thousands of affected civilians. The adoption of resolution 2365 (2017) on mine action was a clear sign of the concerns we share about the serious threat to civilians, including children and humanitarian and medical personnel, represented by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

In this regard, in 2020, 98,131 people in Angola — primarily children, the main victims of accidents — were made aware about the risks posed by mines.

International donations to Angola's demining programme are increasingly diminished and scarce, with the country now supported by the United States of America, Japan and the United Kingdom. National and international actors are looking for new assistance so as to move forward with the demining process.

In conclusion, landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continue to pose threats to international peace and security as they do more than injure and kill thousands of people every year, whether in conflict situations or not; they aggravate social disintegration and trigger serious negative economic effects and environmental problems.

It is against this backdrop that Angola reiterates its commitment to continue working, in partnership with international donors and national and international actors, within the scope of the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, to destroy all anti-personnel mines by 31 December 2025.

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**Annex 22****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Argentina attaches great significance to demining activities and the humanitarian implications thereof. In this regard, the successful negotiation and adoption of international instruments in this domain was undoubtedly a major achievement, foremost among them the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also worth highlighting the establishment of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

Of particular relevance, due to its specific nature, is the Ottawa Convention, signed on 3 December 1997, which entered into force for the Argentine Republic on 1 March 2001. This instrument currently enjoys the support of the majority of States Members of the United Nations, and establishes specific commitments regarding the prohibition and destruction of mines and reporting thereon.

Regular contributions through national reports to the various existing mechanisms help strengthen internal control and mitigate threats. In this regard, we reiterate the importance of upholding commitments undertaken and providing transparent and up-to-date information.

In the same vein, the building of capacity to effectively carry out demining has been aided through various programmes, notably including those of UNMAS.

Sovereignty disputes between States undoubtedly constitute obstacle to effectively tackling mine action, as they can hinder the effective implementation of activities relating to mines and the fulfilment of obligations assumed in this domain.

With regard to Argentina, the only part of the territory on which there is no certainty as to the impact of mines, in this case of anti-personnel mines, is the Malvinas Islands. But Argentina is being prevented from accessing that territory to comply with its international obligations because it, together with South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, are the subject of a sovereignty dispute and illegally occupied by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Indeed, the United Nations has recognized the existence of such a sovereignty dispute and called on both Governments to resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful and definitive solution as soon as possible. However, despite repeated pronouncements by the United Nations and other regional and international forums, the United Kingdom persists in its refusal to resume such negotiations.

In this regard, Argentina views it as essential that, when difficulties arise in the demining process due to the disputed nature of a territory, and that nature of the territory as subject to a sovereignty dispute is recognized by the United Nations, priority be given to cooperation and the technical and humanitarian nature of tasks related to demining so that all States parties can fulfil their obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

That is why Argentina maintained a clear and unwavering commitment to completing the demining of the Malvinas Islands bilaterally, cognizant of the humanitarian nature of this mission and of the commitments undertaken in the context of the Ottawa Convention. This resulted in the Agreements by Exchange of



Notes, under the sovereignty formula, dated 11 October 2001 and 3 August 2006, to conduct a feasibility study on the removal of anti-personnel mines, including unexploded ordnance, from mined areas in the Malvinas Islands. The corresponding final report was approved by both Governments and submitted, separately, to the Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. However, in 2009, the United Kingdom began demining tasks unilaterally, without the participation of Argentina.

Despite this situation, Argentina continued showing its willingness to cooperate and, in 2019, proposed conducting the remaining demining activities jointly with the United Kingdom and concluding the demining process in 2020. However, the United Kingdom rejected both proposals.

With regard to the mechanisms provided for in the Ottawa Convention, it is important to recall that, on the occasion of the first request for an extension to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, Argentina presented a schematic plan for implementation of article 5 of the Convention in the disputed areas. Upon expiration of the first extension, Argentina requested a second extension of three years, which will expire on 1 March 2023.



## Annex 23

### Statement by the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations, Mher Margaryan

I would like to commend the presidency of Viet Nam for including in its agenda various aspects of protection of civilian population in armed conflicts and to thank them for organizing this open debate on the topic of “Mine action and sustainable peace: stronger partnerships for better delivery”. I also thank the Secretary-General and other distinguished briefers for addressing mine action challenges in the context of the peace and security agenda and reflecting on the role of international actors.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continue to pose a serious threat to the security of civilian populations, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. People residing in conflict areas are particularly vulnerable to the threats posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance, which affect their daily lives and have a negative impact on their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life and the right to development.

Mine action, as part of humanitarian emergency response, plays an important role in the protection of lives, human rights and the dignity of civilians trapped in conflict, including by offering threat mitigation, mine clearance of communities and agricultural areas, risk education and awareness-raising, as well as victim assistance and rehabilitation.

Armenia is committed to the global efforts in the field of mine action. The Armenian humanitarian mission in Syria continues to conduct physical demining activities in the residential areas of Aleppo province and to promote mine-awareness, with a view to ensuring the safety and security of the civilian population in close cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service.

The Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise, a non-commercial State institution, has developed cooperation with international and regional organizations, as well as humanitarian demining agencies, in the fields of mine awareness, survey and clearance of contaminated areas and victim assistance.

For almost three decades the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and border communities of Armenia have been severely affected by massive mine contamination as a result of military activities of Azerbaijan. Mine accidents have led to the killing, maiming and injury of many civilians, including children, and have significantly impeded socioeconomic development. Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed demining activities, as part of its wider policy of obstructing humanitarian access by the international community to Nagorno-Karabakh.

The large-scale military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, with the support of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters, on 27 September 2020, has led to further contamination of the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, in particular civilian settlements, by unexploded ordnance. Azerbaijan has been using all types of heavy weaponry, including multiple-launch rocket systems, artillery, missiles, various types of unmanned aerial vehicles, military aircraft and banned cluster munitions to conduct targeted attacks on the civilian population in gross violation of international humanitarian law. Hundreds of cluster bomblets, submunitions and other explosive remnants in residential areas of Nagorno-Karabakh have caused serious security risks to civilians. Human Rights Watch has documented the use of cluster munitions in various populated areas of the capital city, Stepanakert, and other settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since the establishment of the ceasefire and the deployment of the peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the humanitarian deminers

have cleared 1,873 hectares of territory, including residential areas and agricultural fields, of unexploded ordnance and neutralized more than 25,000 explosive objects, which also highlights the scope of the challenge.

The politicization and obstruction by Azerbaijan of safe and unimpeded humanitarian access for United Nations agencies to the conflict zone undermines the comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian, protection and early-recovery needs and the human rights situation of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia stands ready to continue its cooperation with the United Nations to deliver a humanitarian relief response in Nagorno-Karabakh, including for the mitigation of the consequences caused by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices for the conflict-affected population, in line with humanitarian principles. A human rights-based, people-centred and inclusive approach is key to effective international cooperation in the field of mine action in conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies.

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**Annex 24****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations**

Australia is a long-standing supporter of mine action and recognizes that appropriate mine action plays a vital role in enabling peace, security and development. Landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) can have devastating long-term impacts well beyond the duration of the conflict in which they have been employed. Those impacts are far-reaching; they affect the lives of individuals and their families, livelihoods and economies. This is the reason Australia views mine action as one of the fundamental ways to advance development and sustain peace and security.

Anti-personnel mines, IEDs, some cluster munitions and other ERW may pose a disproportionate threat to civilian populations, both during and after hostilities. These explosive hazards can cause indiscriminate death and suffering, prevent displaced people from returning home, limit access to education and health care, and can delay economic development long after conflict has ceased.

These impacts have been felt even more sharply in the context of the pandemic and its disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and disadvantaged. The prevailing threat of explosive hazards can harm host nations' prospects of rebuilding in a post-conflict environment and harm sustainable economic and governance architectures that underwrite human security and prosperity.

Australia believes mine action makes a critical contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Mine action, including the clearance of landmines, IEDs, cluster munitions and other ERW, has a direct and positive impact on development. These effects span from allowing land to be used again for agriculture, enabling communities to grow crops improving food security, to providing safe access to health-care facilities and improving the overall health and well-being of affected communities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that for every dollar invested in mine action, economies benefit by \$11 — without even factoring in the preservation of life that results from clearing areas of these hazards.

Australia considers the clearing of landmines, cluster munitions, IEDs and other ERW to be a humanitarian imperative for the successful distribution of aid and safe return home of thousands of displaced residents. To this end, Australia is providing funding to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq to conduct mapping and mine clearance.

We also support efforts to pursue work on stockpile management and encourage cooperation in capacity-building and establishing best practices. Australia is a strong supporter of the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War — Protocol V — to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Noting that there are only 96 States parties to this Protocol, we strongly encourage other States to endorse it.

In the health and disability context, Australia provides explosive hazard victim support through access to mainstream health and disability services. This approach aligns with national ownership, brings health-related victim assistance in line with best practice development assistance and frees up resources for explosive hazard clearance.

Since 1994 Australia has contributed more than \$A100 million to demining activities in Cambodia. This has resulted in approximately 9.67 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) of land being released for productive use — 8.87 km<sup>2</sup> from clearance and 0.80km<sup>2</sup> from the land reclamation non-technical survey — in 2019 and 2020. Australia provided an additional contribution of \$A1 million in 2021 to further assist

Cambodia's demining efforts. This funding will help increase the area that can be cleared of landmines, making the lives of Cambodians safer and releasing land for productive use to support Cambodia's coronavirus disease economic recovery.

Australia's support has also helped Cambodia develop its national mine action strategy for the period 2018 to 2025, creating a framework for Cambodia to pursue its goal of a mine-free Cambodia and structure the resource mobilization of cleared land in the most affected provinces of Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Pailin, where the presence of land mines limits agricultural activity.

In addition, Australia contributes to improving the quality of services for persons with disabilities, many of whom are victims of landmines, through the Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services programme, a three-year — 2018 to 2021 — \$A15 million initiative to improve the sustainability, quality and inclusiveness of services for persons with disabilities.

Circumstances remain where Governments may be unable to provide victim assistance in their territory, through health and disability services, particularly in humanitarian situations. In these cases, it is necessary that victim assistance be provided through those organizations with the specialist skills to do so.

Australia is proud of its collaborative work on mine action, working with national and international partners to address the threats posed by explosive hazards, such as landmines, cluster munitions, IEDs and other remnants of war.

Australia promotes practical cooperation and builds regional humanitarian mine action capacity through the provision of direct training to military personnel, as well as participating in regional forums, such as the meeting of the Defence Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus Experts Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action.

One example of practical cooperation is Australia's long-standing Operation Render Safe, which helps Pacific Island countries dispose of ERW in the South-West Pacific. Operation Render Safe utilizes the Australian Defence Force's explosive ordnance disposal capability to reduce the threat of unexploded remnants of war to human life and property. It disposes of these items and provides education and training to nations in our region to improve their own capabilities.

Since its commencement in 2008, Operation Render Safe has conducted disposal programmes in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Each iteration of Operation Render Safe is conducted by invitation and with the full cooperation of the relevant Government.

Operation Render Safe demonstrates Australia's fulfilment of relevant international obligations and responsibilities under Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and develops the explosive ordnance disposal capability of participating nations. The location of Operation Render Safe is based on the needs of States in our region and determined in consultation with the relevant Governments.

The land release associated with ERW clearance also boosts economic prosperity by allowing families and communities to farm more land safely for food cultivation and trade.

Globally, Australia considers it important to invest in work to build common understanding and improve our collective ability to respond to common challenges concerning mine action.

For example, in 2018 Australia supported the development of the first United Nations IED disposal standards. These standards marked an important step towards

a common understanding of requirements and establishing stronger capabilities in the field. Australia also supported the development and translation of the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes and monitoring and evaluation tools for the UNMAS strategy.

In 2019, we were pleased to support a strong and gender-sensitive Oslo Action Plan to guide States' implementation of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention. In this regard, in partnership with UNMAS in Afghanistan, Australia made a specific investment in gender mainstreaming in mine action, building on efforts to champion programming that advances women's rights and protections in Afghanistan.

We have long-standing partnerships with multiple mine action organizations engaged in advocacy encouraging the implementation of conventions on explosive hazards, such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines — Cluster Munitions Coalition. Over the period of 2019 to 2020, Australia provided over \$A25 million to mine action projects with UNMAS, UNDP and other partners, adapting projects where required to pandemic conditions.

Australia has also been a long-standing coordinator of the sponsorship programme for the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention. While the programme was interrupted in 2020 owing to the pandemic, we helped facilitate 47 participants from mine-affected countries attend the Convention's meetings in 2019. This enabled direct interaction with the Convention's work by capital and field-based experts from countries with limited means.

With regard to maximizing the complementary potential of mine action instruments, Australia takes a comprehensive approach to reducing the suffering caused by the unlawful use of explosive weapons. Australia is a strong supporter of not only the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, but also the Convention on Cluster Munitions and all protocols of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We continue to work towards reducing and ultimately eliminating the socioeconomic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other ERW in accordance with our international obligations. Australia seeks to improve the quality of life for survivors, reduce the number of deaths and injuries and enhance the capacity of countries to manage mine action programmes.

We are committed to the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, updated in 2019, including the provisions of the broad legal framework upon which they are based, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, on whose Committee we are currently serving.

In the light of our comprehensive approach, we urge States that have not acceded to these conventions to take concrete steps towards doing so and fulfil their obligations. By addressing explosive hazards in a complementary manner across conventions and protocols, we believe the international community can reduce the impact of these weapons in an efficient and effective manner.

**Annex 25****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations**

In line with the traditional humanitarian and rules-based focus of Austria's foreign policy, Austria has been active in the field of mine action from the outset of the Ottawa process and was a member of the core group of States that elaborated the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. This open debate on mine action is therefore highly appreciated.

The success of humanitarian disarmament projects has always largely relied on the excellent cooperation among interested States and civil society. Collaboration with our partners, assembled in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, led to a treaty banning a heinous type of weapon that kills and maims people without regard to gender, age or status, especially civilians, even many years after the cessation of hostilities. With a total of 164 States bound by this treaty today, it has become a true success story in the field of disarmament.

Yet not every State has joined. Austria calls on those States to refrain from the production, acquisition, stockpiling, trade, retention or transfer of anti-personnel landmines and to consider signing and ratifying the Convention as soon as possible. Austria unequivocally condemns the use of mines anywhere, anytime and by any actor, regardless of whether they are States or non-State actors, and reaffirms its support for actions addressing the threats of anti-personnel landmines, including those of an improvised nature.

The Convention is a prime example of the rules-based international order, firmly based on full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Austria is committed to supporting the whole panoply of mine action: mine clearance, stockpile destruction, victim assistance, risk education and advocacy. Since the entry into force of the Convention, Austria has supported mine action with more than €34 million in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique.

Austria supports wholeheartedly the Oslo Action Plan's aim of achieving a world free of mines by the year 2025 and calls on all States, as well as civil society, to redouble efforts to achieve that goal. But one thing is clear: even after we have reached a world free of mines, the need for caring for the victims of landmines and their families will continue. Addressing this humanitarian challenge is a duty that will occupy our agenda also for a long time in the future.

**Annex 26****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, Yashar Aliyev**

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the delegation of Viet Nam on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. Azerbaijan welcomes the initiative of Viet Nam to convene this meeting on a matter of high relevance and importance.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continue to affect many countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, posing a deadly threat to civilians and service, peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel.

We appreciate the support of the United Nations in strengthening mine-action capacity in Azerbaijan. Established in 1999, the Azerbaijan National Mine Action Agency, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, has helped clear more than 800,000 mines and other explosive ordnance in Azerbaijan over the past 20 years, helping to ensure the safe return of over 160,500 displaced people to their homes.

However, Azerbaijan is among those countries in post-conflict situations that continue to suffer from the deadly effects of landmines and the explosive remnants of war. As is well known, at the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, Armenia unleashed a full-scale war against Azerbaijan. As a result, a significant part of the territory of Azerbaijan was occupied by that country. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people and ruined cities, towns and villages. All captured areas were ethnically cleansed of more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis. As a result of the counteroffensive operation undertaken and successfully accomplished by the armed forces of Azerbaijan in response to yet another act of aggression committed by Armenia on 27 September 2020, some 10,000 square kilometres of the territory of Azerbaijan, with more than 300 cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan, were liberated from occupation.

The statement signed on 10 November 2020 by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation put an end to the almost three-decades-old armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and set agreed parameters for establishing durable peace in the region. On 11 January 2021, the leaders of the three countries signed a further joint statement aimed at implementing a number of practical steps to remove obstacles to economic and transport links in the region.

However, since the signing of the aforementioned 10 November 2020 statement, 20 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 14 civilians, have been killed — and 87 citizens, including 16 civilians, have been seriously wounded — as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Throughout the conflict, most of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, even including cemeteries, historical sites and other civilian objects, were systematically and indiscriminately planted with mines by Armenia.

That country refuses to release information about the minefields in the liberated areas, thus deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in the liberated territories and the return of the internally displaced persons to their homes in safety and dignity. Armenia's conduct constitutes a clear violation of international law and demonstrates its unwillingness to comply with its international obligations and refrain from confrontational policies.

In his report on the comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623), the Secretary-General emphasized that, as a precursor to peace and sustainable development, mine action makes important practical contributions to the building

of trust between parties. Along the same lines, the concept note prepared for today's meeting (S/2021/284) points out that mine action is critical to sustainable development and positively contributes to stabilization and sustaining peace.

These words are highly pressing today, as the new situation in our region paves the way for hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced persons to exercise their right to a safe and dignified return to their places of origin and, despite the devastating consequences of the war, offers a unique opportunity and real prospects for building peace, consolidating stability, restoring peaceful coexistence, advancing the reconciliation agenda and investing in economic development and cooperation. Therefore, an urgent international response is crucial to ensuring justice, accountability and the protection of the lives and human rights of those living under the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war.



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**Annex 27****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima**

I wish to thank the Vietnam presidency for arranging today's important debate on mine action and sustaining peace. I thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is total and unwavering. In accordance with its duties under its Constitution, Bangladesh continues to remain at the forefront in assuming obligations under all major multilateral disarmament treaties. Bangladesh was one of first few countries in South Asia to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and we have complied fully with our treaty obligations by destroying our stockpiles within the stipulated time frame.

Landmines are typically considered to be part of the security domain. However, considering the cross-sectoral nature of mine action, it needs to be understood more holistically and applied in a comprehensive peacebuilding framework to sustain peace. The international community has achieved some progress in addressing the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, which has been reflected by the significant reduction in casualties over the last two decades, as well as by enhanced cooperation among mine-action actors.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. There has been growing concern over the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Further, in post-conflict situations, mines and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim, often making it impossible for refugees and internally displaced people to return to their homes.

Bangladesh remains concerned over casualties suffered by our peacekeepers owing to indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices by non-State actors in certain mission settings. It is critical that further attention be given to United Nations peacekeeping intelligence and to enhancing support for mine action by United Nations peacekeeping missions, including through the additional deployment of expertise and equipment.

We subscribe to the notion that mine-action activities need to be integrated into the broader framework of the three United Nations pillars in order to encompass a broader humanitarian and developmental approach and expand the scope of activities. In this regard, I would like to offer the following insights.

First, sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are complementary and mutually reinforcing in promoting respect for human rights, inclusion and gender equality. Thousands of victims of mines or explosive remnants of war incidents are at risk of being left behind in the development and humanitarian fields. Collaborative and inclusive actions are therefore required when focusing on demining activities.

Secondly, the international community needs to provide policymakers at national and international levels with data and context-specific analysis on mine-action trends and emerging challenges. We call for allocating the resources necessary for mine action activities, as well as care and protection services for victims.

Thirdly, international actors should support affected States in developing and implementing national strategies and formulating laws and policies that guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, including survivors. They should also provide national authorities with technical assistance and capacity-building support on mine-action activities.

Fourthly, we need to step up efforts for the universalization and implementation of all mine-action conventions and urgently call upon the countries that have yet to sign or accede to the relevant Conventions to do so.

Finally, the Security Council should maintain a clear focus on addressing the impacts of mines and explosive remnants of war and to further integrate all dimensions of mine action. Coordination across the entire United Nations system is also required to improve the coherence, effectiveness and impact of collective responses delivered to support national authorities in this area.

**Annex 28****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Philippe Kridelka**

The continued threat posed to human lives, security and humanitarian efforts by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is a serious focus of attention for the Security Council. In particular, over the years, IEDs have increasingly affected the work of peacekeeping operations and caused many casualties among peacekeepers.

Mine action is a critical enabler of both political and humanitarian efforts. It allows refugees and internally displaced persons to safely return home, and it contributes to stabilization and peacebuilding. We therefore appreciate the holding of today's debate as well as other initiatives undertaken to help to further integrate the issue of mine action in the work of the Security Council.

Appropriate wording in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and dedicated reporting in reports of the Secretary-General will reinforce the contribution that mine action makes to the full achievement of the objectives of the missions in question. Too often, such preparatory work to tackle explosive threats as the predeployment training of troops from contributing countries, depends on voluntary funding. Explosive-ordnance-threat mitigation should be funded through the peacekeeping support account.

Mine action should adapt to changing environments, and, in this regard, a more integrated approach is needed to enhance our capacity to tackle the evolving threat of IEDs. Peacekeeping operations and other actors in the field should systematically exchange information on all incidents involving IEDs and adopt appropriate defensive measures. Further efforts are needed to prevent access to precursor material. In the field, this means swiftly disposing of explosive remnants of war, including legacy minefields, and ensuring the safe management of ammunition stockpiles. More broadly, trafficking routes for explosive-precursor material should be charted. Peacekeeping operations and panels of experts can help gather knowledge on these IED-supply chains.

United Nations agencies, in accordance with their respective mandates and in full respect of the primary responsibility of States, have a role to play in assisting and protecting those affected by explosive ordnance, empowering affected individuals and communities and strengthening national capacities to manage the risks of explosive ordnance. In this respect, Belgium commends the role played by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), specifically in its support for peace operations deployed to high-risk environments. The support UNMAS gives to mitigating the threat of explosive ordnance in peace operations should be financed through the support account in order to be consistent and sustainable. Over the past two years, Belgium has donated €3 million for UNMAS activities in Iraq, and €1 million for its work in Syria.

Faced with the multiple threats of explosive ordnance, we are once again reminded of the crucial importance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, also known as the Ottawa Convention. It provides a long-term solution by outlawing anti-personnel mines and by committing States parties to destroying stockpiles and clearing existing minefields.

My country calls upon all States that are not yet parties to the Ottawa Convention, in particular major possessors of anti-personnel mines, to move forward towards signing and ratifying the Ottawa Convention and, in the meantime, to following a self-declared policy of non-use.

## Annex 29

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations

Although landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices still haunt a third of the States in the international community and have a direct impact on the lives, well-being and livelihoods of entire populations, it is still an overlooked topic. Brazil therefore thanks the Vietnamese presidency for convening today's open debate and drawing attention to the matter.

Today's meeting represents a valuable opportunity to discuss the role of the Security Council in addressing mine-action challenges and mine-action cooperation at the national, regional and international levels, so as to meet the needs of affected communities and countries. In addition, we hope countries will have a chance to share best practices on how to advance international humanitarian demining efforts through both multilateral and bilateral initiatives.

In addition to the destruction and suffering they cause, landmines and explosive remnants of war are among the cruellest residues left by conflicts, especially in the developing world. Further, improvised explosive devices amount to one of the main causes of fatalities in peacekeeping missions. Their long-term effects on the civilian population, especially on vulnerable groups, have the potential to disrupt the lives of communities for generations, making post-conflict peacebuilding efforts extremely difficult. Although parties in conflict bear the responsibility of mitigating the risk posed to civilians by explosive devices, the hazardous humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines makes humanitarian demining initiatives a moral responsibility for the whole of the international community. Accordingly, Brazil commends the Security Council for adopting resolution 2365 (2017) and for including mine action-related activities in peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

Brazil condemns the indiscriminate use of explosive devices in violation of international humanitarian law. Our country is of the view that the Security Council must continue to address mine action as doing so enhances the mobility and safety of civilian populations and that of peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel.

Although Brazil does not have areas contaminated by landmines in its territory, it has sought to contribute to international humanitarian demining efforts both through field operations and capacity-building initiatives. It is Brazil's understanding that humanitarian demining operations play a vital role in strengthening stabilization, reconciliation and peacebuilding, as such operations are crucial for reintegration of the territory, reunification of divided communities, reconstruction of infrastructure and resumption of economic activity. In this regard, Brazil welcomes the landmark decision taken this year at the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which, in partnership with the United Nations Mine Action Service, encourages the deployment of specialized mobile training teams focused on improving the skills of troop-contributing countries in the demining, detection and elimination of improvised explosive devices.

Within the scope of the United Nations, Brazil has contributed to important humanitarian demining efforts on the African continent, especially during the United Nations Angola Verification Mission. Under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), Brazil actively participated in the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in Central America and in the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in South America. Brazil has also developed significant humanitarian demining and capacity-building projects through bilateral agreements with a number of countries, such as Angola, Benin, Colombia and Mozambique.

Since 2011, the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Centre has offered a specific mine-action training programme aimed at preparing military personnel

to perform functions of international supervision and monitoring in humanitarian demining missions under the auspices of international organizations. The programme trains Brazilian and foreign military personnel to act as advisers in decision-making processes in humanitarian demining missions, as well as to provide technical support to United Nations bodies, OAS organs, host-country governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations acting in humanitarian demining environments.

The coronavirus disease pandemic poses a new threat to communities affected by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, as well as added challenges to humanitarian demining efforts. These challenges can, however, be mitigated by the implementation of coordinated health and safety actions, as well as by using appropriate technology, which should be made available on the ground.

As a proud party to the Ottawa Convention, Brazil has sought to fulfil its moral responsibilities in international mine-action efforts and intends to continue to cooperate with partners within and outside its region in order to build capacity and promote humanitarian demining initiatives around the world.

**Annex 30****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations**

[Original: English and French]

Canada would first like to thank the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for having organized this open debate, which will allow us to reflect on the new challenges posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to civilians, peacekeepers, humanitarian personnel and mine-action personnel. It also provides an occasion to discuss the role of the Security Council in mine action.

Canada expresses its deep concern about the fact that according to the Landmine Monitor, 2019 was the fifth year in a row with high numbers of recorded casualties — more than 5,500 worldwide — due to the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines and anti-vehicle mines, including from cluster munitions remnants, other ERW and a significant number from improvised mines. The use of improvised mines has resulted in a high number of casualties in recent years, with the vast majority of victims being civilians, including many children.

Canada condemns any use of improvised explosive devices by any actor. We recall that anti-personnel mines are defined under the Ottawa Treaty based on how they are triggered; they are “designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons”, and not defined based on their method of fabrication. This means that the Convention applies to all anti-personnel mines, whether improvised or factory-made. With that understanding in mind, Canada calls on all States to formally declare anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature to be under the Convention, where they fall under the definitions in article 2 of the Ottawa Treaty.

Moreover, Canada actively advocates for an inclusive approach to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, including engagement by youth and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. We also apply a gender lens in all programming activities related to disarmament and arms control. In that sense, we believe that women’s participation in conducting mine-risk education, surveying, community liaison and clearance work is essential to gaining access to population segments otherwise inaccessible to male-only teams. In accordance with the women and peace and security agenda, we urge States to fully integrate gender considerations into mine-action efforts and ensure that mine clearance, risk education and victim assistance programmes take into account the human rights and needs of all women and girls.

Canada remains a strong supporter of the Treaty and its goals, as demonstrated by our engagement in the Treaty’s activities and by Canada’s \$450 million contribution to mine action around the world over the last two decades (1999-2021). Among our commitments, Canada provides institutional support to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, which includes support for the implementation support units of both the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

We are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to deepen our involvement in mine action. Canada will continue advocating for the universalization of the Ottawa Treaty and to focus our efforts on the ambitious pursuit of the 2025 goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines. We will succeed only on the strength of our collective efforts.

Finally, Canada is aware that the mine-action community has been severely affected by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We remain committed to contributing as much as we can and to keep working with our partners in order to help them overcome those challenges.

**Annex 31****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank Viet Nam for the opportunity to share Chile's experience in the delicate process of demining in our country, which began in 2003 and ended in March 2020. The most important lesson we learned was to ensure that our goal was a common one. In order to achieve it, joint efforts were required under the auspices of the Ottawa Convention on the part of States, institutions and civil society.

Thus, just over a year ago, Chile officially announced that it was free of anti-personnel mines, thus contributing through its intersectoral work to a much greater goal: global demining.

The process involved 17 years of ongoing efforts, without interruption or delay, that spanned five Governments in my country, which shows that this undertaking was carried out as a State policy and that that decision remained unchanged over time.

Chile's efforts took account of the geographical location of minefields; the protection of civilians; the inclusion of local communities; assistance to and reparations for victims; and, finally, prevention, involving education.

In that respect, an institutional framework was created that supported the process, through the National Demining Commission, under the authority of the Presidency of the Republic and composed of a multisectoral team chaired by the Ministry of Defence with the participation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Health, which first established that the existence of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines in our country was for purely defensive reasons.

The National Demining Commission elaborated the 2003-2020 humanitarian demining plan, which ensured compliance with the Convention. The roles played by the army, navy and air force were crucial to the success of that task, which addressed climatic, geographical and access-related challenges, which on many occasions made these efforts exponentially more dangerous given the specificities of our country's territory.

Thus the territorial and logistical approach was key to the carrying out of a meticulous demining process, with special attention to articles 5 and 6.3 of the Ottawa Convention, which emphasize the need for a process centred on people and their well-being, including the protection of civilians, and prioritizing efforts according to the proximity of minefields to populated areas; fields located near borders; and, finally, fields located in areas that are difficult to access.

A national registry of victims was also prepared for assistance in the process, which included a total of 209 victims — 103 civilians and 106 military personnel. They also provided comprehensive health care, which facilitated the creation of more personal ties and allowed for close cooperation between the parties. A series of home interviews was also carried out and, through an ongoing dialogue with the victims, it was possible to identify their most urgent needs and to provide rehabilitation and reparation and assistance to victims of accidents caused by mines, based on law No. 21.021 of 2017.

The Commission complemented the process with prevention activities aimed mainly at at-risk groups, that is, people who live in areas near minefields that were later demined.



Education for future generations in that respect also played a key role, and a programme was developed in coordination with the Ministry of Education that included, among other activities, the presentation of a play called “Demining and School”.

That process was not an easy task, both because of the significant financial costs associated with demining itself and because of the heavy professional and human burden for those who carried out that dangerous work on the ground. In some cases, 24-hour shifts were required in order to comply with the need for demining within the established deadlines, in addition to the need to work around the clock; and logistical issues such as the establishment and maintenance of camps, given the rough terrain and extreme geographical conditions in our country, with altitude-related issues mainly in the north of the country as well as mine displacement as a result of torrential rains or even exposure to the extremely cold climates prevailing in the south.

Today we can say that the overall number of mines destroyed reached 181,814, but we must recall the sacrifices made and the cost borne by those who between 2005 and 2018 were the victims of one of the 10 accidents that occurred during the demining process.

Chile could not have achieved what we are reporting today during this debate without mutual international cooperation and collaboration, as well as by regional cooperation in particular. In that respect, Chile participated in assistance and cooperation programmes in Nicaragua, on instructions for demining; in Central America, in a mission of assistance and mine clearance; in Argentina, in bilateral data exchange cooperation; in Bolivia, in training Bolivian army personnel in demining; and in Peru, an exchange of experiences in the area of demining, since we believe that our experience in the region can represent a contribution for those who need it.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate our deep gratitude for the important contributions made by the international community to that end, including the delivery of protection and mine-detection equipment and training for personnel who participated in the demining process and who faced geographical and climatic difficulties owing to geographical extremes that made the location and subsequent destruction of mines difficult, especially given the existence of variations in their original location.

We hope that our country’s experience can be of use to other countries that are engaged in similar processes, and we reiterate our willingness to continue to provide multilateral support in pursuit of our common goal: to finally achieve a world free of anti-personnel mines.

## Annex 32

## Statement by the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Guillermo Roque Fernandez De Soto Valderrama

[Original: Spanish]

Colombia congratulates Viet Nam on having convened this open debate.

We are convinced that this debate will lead to a broader and more complete understanding of the importance of enhancing cooperation and multilateral efforts aimed at identifying the new threats and challenges posed by anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. Strengthening action in this area in a comprehensive manner is a key objective given the humanitarian dimensions of the issue.

Our country has been affected by this type of weapon, with non-State armed actors, organized criminal groups and residual organized armed groups being responsible for their indiscriminate use. Such illegal action, which is closely linked to illegal economies, has affected the civilian population and the armed forces, in contravention of the applicable national and international regulations.

Colombia has worked for years to confront that scourge and eradicate it definitively, honouring its commitment to the international obligations set out in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and in Additional Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In our country, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace is the National Technical Authority for Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines. Its mandate is to ensure an effective response based on three pillars: humanitarian demining, comprehensive assistance to victims and mine-risk education. Those pillars are mechanisms that enhance peacebuilding and the culture of legality as State policies, especially in those territories most affected. That is possible thanks to an adequate coordination of policies with the territories, including a synergetic relationship with other key public policies aimed at the stabilization of territories.

We are implementing the strategic plan entitled “Colombia free of anti-personnel mines 2020-2025” and the Operational Plan on Humanitarian Demining 2020-2025, which serve as the basis for the elaboration and implementation of actions that will make it possible to declare the country free of mines by 2025.

The first humanitarian demining operations began in the country in 2004. In the past 12 years, as a result of coordinated and strengthened State action, we have gone from clearing 119,161 square metres in 2009 to 1,365,547 square metres in 2020 — that is, 10 times more land. In addition, 108 explosive devices were destroyed in 2009, a figure that has now risen to more than 575.

In order to continue making positive progress, the national Government established the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines programme, which is aimed at mitigating the social, economic and environmental impact of anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance through the design and implementation of projects focused on protecting and ensuring healthy coexistence in the territories.

In 2020, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, Colombia made progress in the area of demining. It is expected that before the end of April 2021, the national Government will declare 18 additional municipalities free of anti-personnel mines. That will be in addition to the 154 municipalities already cleared since 2018, and thus Colombia is approaching the goal set out in the national development plan of 180 municipalities cleared by 2022.

In terms of mine-risk education, efforts have been made using a differentiated approach for various population groups, including indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

As of February, 20,939 mine-risk education activities had been carried out — 35.03 per cent in emergency situations, 34.62 per cent in humanitarian demining operations, 20.45 per cent in rapid response and 9.9 per cent in education — benefiting 570,805 people. The ultimate goal of mine-risk education and humanitarian demining operations is to ensure that no more Colombians are the victims of those devices and, in that way, to restore their right to use their land in full freedom. Therefore, in 2020 the Government of Colombia allocated significant resources to the development of direct activities with six survivors' associations, thereby maintaining its commitment to the victims.

Among the good practices being carried out in Colombia I wish to highlight the creation of the Comprehensive Care Pathway, which ensures that victims receive assistance, attention and reparations, and, likewise, the establishment of the National Network of Survivors of Anti-personnel Mines, as a means of building trust between the State and the victims.

I would also highlight the successful humanitarian demining pilot project implemented in Colombia in 2015 together with the Geneva-based International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The efforts carried out jointly with United Nations agencies have helped to promote the reintegration of ex-combatants under the guidelines established by the National Government.

Despite the important advances and significant achievements registered in recent years, Colombia continues to face challenges due to the continued use of improvised anti-personnel mines by organized armed groups.

We are grateful for the technical and financial cooperation of the international community to strengthen comprehensive mine action. We also call for intensified efforts in order to advance that goal.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Colombia's unswerving commitment to achieve the goal of a mine-free country by 2025. In that regard, we reaffirm our readiness to share with the international community the best practices and lessons learned over the years.

## Annex 33

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

At the outset, Costa Rica would like to congratulate Viet Nam for convening this ministerial-level open debate on mine action as a critical enabler of post-conflict stabilization, peacebuilding and development efforts. We would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres; Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; and Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, Manager of Project RENEW — an all-women demining team at the Norwegian People's Aid Vietnam — for their insightful briefings.

Efforts to mitigate the impact of landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and explosive remnants of war, which includes unexploded artillery shells, grenades, mortars, rockets, air-dropped bombs and cluster munitions, are critical to global peace and security. However, the most effective way to prevent the harm caused by such weapons is to prevent their use in the first place and to fully implement the treaties banning landmines and cluster munitions.

In that regard, I would like to stress three points.

First, Costa Rica encourages all States Members of the United Nations to renew their political and financial commitment to the issue of landmine and cluster munitions and to stay on course until the job is finished. States that have not acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions should take immediate steps to become signatories, and any and all use of landmines and cluster munitions must be publicly condemned. Costa Rica calls on non-signatory States to stop using landmines and cluster munitions, and urges mine-action donors to stay fully engaged and do all they can to advance their effective and timely clearance.

Secondly, from diplomats to deminers, from advocates to survivors, women play a critical role in global mine-action efforts, and their participation across the board should be celebrated and supported. It is therefore crucial to strengthen language relating to the full and effective participation of women in mine action in country-specific situations and in the context of peacekeeping operations. In that regard, Costa Rica would like to highlight the work that the HALO Trust does in training and employing all-female demining teams in Africa, thereby creating a space for women's empowerment while clearing landmines and making land safe. Humanitarian landmine clearance saves lives and transforms futures.

Thirdly, with the global number of casualties growing, Costa Rica calls on States to step up efforts to provide more targeted and effective risk education, as well as sustainable and accessible victim assistance. Sustaining peace means ensuring that those who are living with contamination from landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs are safe and that those who have been harmed are able to rebuild their lives. Moreover, during the coronavirus disease pandemic, survivors and other persons with disabilities have been unable to access services in a number of affected countries. That is why victim assistance is even more crucial in these difficult times.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs buried during wars from decades ago continue to pose a deadly threat in many parts of the world today. Nevertheless, there are no quick fixes to this problem. Costa Rica deeply regrets that political wrangling and a lack of resources can often stall clearance projects regardless of available technologies. Costa Rica also laments that in certain countries landmines and cluster munitions continue to be used to this day, despite the fact that such weapons have little to no tactical purpose yet cause tremendous human

suffering. That must change. As a first step, Costa Rica calls on the Secretary-General to include in his annual report on the protection of civilians a section on the effects of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs on civilians.

**Annex 34****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, Cristian Espinosa Cañizares**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank Viet Nam for organizing this open debate on the theme “Mine action and sustaining peace — stronger partnerships for better delivery”, as well as for adopting a substantive work programme for the month of April, with five interlinked open debates that mutually reinforce today’s debate, including one on regional cooperation and one on the protection of civilians.

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Bui Thanh Son on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam and Ms. Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, Manager of Project RENEW, an all-woman demining team, for her contribution to the debate. Ecuador also appreciates the briefings by Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Daniel Craig, United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Other Explosive Hazards; Ms. Michelle Yeoh, United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador; and Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

This debate serves to review the status of implementation of the first mine-related resolution — resolution 2365 (2017), adopted on 30 June 2017. I also stress that the Secretary-General’s report on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623) is invaluable.

Four years after the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017), Ecuador believes that it is now appropriate to consider the adoption of a resolution that would update the mandate of resolution 2365 (2017) on the basis of progress made in its implementation; reiterate the need to continue to support demining around the world, including through international cooperation; and focus on promoting efforts to improve mechanisms to protect civilians, including from explosive remnants of war and cluster munitions. The role of regional and subregional organizations is key in that regard.

I wish to highlight the milestones achieved by Ecuador and Peru in the field of demining, and our commitment to move towards a mine-free Latin America and the Caribbean.

On 10 and 11 February, Ecuador participated in the Regional Dialogue on Humanitarian Demining, with the attendance of delegations from several countries and organizations involved in humanitarian demining processes around the world.

On 26 March, at the 22nd meeting of national anti-personnel mine action authorities, we assessed the current status of explosives clearance and demining of the common border, adversely affected in 2020 as a consequence of the health emergency caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

On the same date, Ecuador, as co-sponsor of the Arria Formula meeting of the Security Council on improvised explosive devices, stated that the efforts of the Organization to protect the civilian population, peace missions and humanitarian personnel could be effective only if they were comprehensive and addressed all dimensions of the threats posed by explosives.

During the First Committee debate on this topic, I stressed that Ecuador is committed to laying a foundation for development instead of landmines on its borders, and invited all States to do the same.

Finally, we reiterate our support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their

Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention, and invite all States Members of the United Nations to better coordinate the work of the Organization and deepen synergies with the goals of the Convention, including by acceding to it.



## Annex 35

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations

I should like to thank you at the outset for holding this meeting, which deals with an important topic, namely, the impact of landmines on international peace and security. I also wish to express my appreciation for all the briefings that have been provided to the Security Council in this regard.

Landmines are a chronic problem plaguing numerous societies in the aftermath of war. They have lasting implications for security and development. They pose numerous obstacles to development in certain States that have seen intensive use of mines by warring parties on their territories.

Egypt is one of those countries. It has been suffering from a persistent landmine problem for more than 75 years, and is in fact one of the most-affected countries in the world. There were over 22 million mines and other explosive objects planted on Egyptian soil during the Second World War, more than 20 per cent of the worldwide total. There are still some 17.2 million landmines in the Al-Alamein area in the Western Desert.

Landmines constitute a major barrier to sustainable and comprehensive development. They prevent societies from making the best use of areas in which they have been laid. They also inflict suffering on civilians in the form of both human and material losses. The process of detecting and removing landmines requires considerable financial resources. Landmines are one of the biggest obstacles to development in the areas where they are located, where they prevent land from being reclaimed for agriculture, tourism or mineral exploration.

States that have planted mines in other countries have failed to carry out their responsibility to assist in demining in the absence of a legally binding instrument that explicitly provides for that responsibility. That will only increase mistrust among Member States, especially since such agreements as currently exist were negotiated outside the aegis of the United Nations and are not universal. International security and development opportunities are likely to suffer negative impacts. International efforts are still insufficient to deal with the scale of the challenge.

Egypt had a proactive position on the issue of anti-personnel mines even before the adoption of the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, despite not acceding to it. Egypt voluntarily committed to stop exporting anti-personnel mines in 1984, and to stop manufacturing them in 1988. Egypt has tried to negotiate the inclusion in that treaty of clear commitments on the responsibility of countries that have planted mines in the territories of other States to clear those mines. That has been ignored.

Demining operations in Egypt have encountered numerous difficulties. There is a lack of accurate records of minefields. Mines that have been in the ground for over 50 years have become more sensitive with time. Mines have changed location owing to factors such as weather and the movement of sand dunes, which has rendered available mine maps of the Egyptian Western Desert useless. Suspected landmine areas have gotten bigger, as has the cost of clearing them so Egypt can realize their economic potential.

Egypt calls for a new international approach that addresses the issue of landmines from a development perspective that focuses on enabling affected countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and allows the countries responsible for laying the mines to dispose of their obligations by cooperating with other countries and international organizations willing to provide demining assistance.

Egypt looks forward to the Middle East and the world enjoying stability, peace and security, and achieving the aspirations of all peoples for a better tomorrow. That requires taking a serious approach to eliminating anti-personnel landmines.

**Annex 36****Statement by the Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

El Salvador thanks the Vietnamese presidency for including this issue in its programme of work. My country is firmly committed to putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. As a part of Central America, a region that has been declared a mine-free zone, and a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention, my country is proud of the enormous progress made to date in protecting women, boys, girls and men from the threat of anti-personnel mines and their use.

However, despite significant progress in this area, it is clear that much remains to be done to address the challenge of eliminating the threat of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, now compounded by the challenge of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Bearing in mind that each mine destroyed can save lives or prevent irreparable harm to its victims, El Salvador will continue to actively join efforts to put an end to the use of such weapons, which is an obstacle to sustainable peace. That is why it is critical to continuously update and strengthen action plans in that regard, including by addressing new improvised uses of such weapons, in order to effectively protect people.

El Salvador's commitment to demining and related experience is reflected through its support for the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission from 1998 to 2003 and the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in Central America from 1997 to 2010, and its participation from 2008 to date — with personnel from its Armed Forces Engineer Command — in the mine-clearance efforts of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon .

Currently, El Salvador's most active participation in peacekeeping operations is through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which, unfortunately, has had the highest fatality rates, with a significant number of casualties from anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

For that reason, and bearing in mind that peacekeeping operations are taking place in increasingly dangerous and complex environments, El Salvador believes that we must give the highest priority to the task of guaranteeing the security of peacekeepers, who must be provided with predeployment and post-deployment training and appropriate equipment to mitigate the threat of such devices.

Similarly, El Salvador stresses the importance of addressing the threat posed by anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices from the early stages of the planning and programming of peacekeeping operations. That practice enables the protection of civilians and peacekeepers, facilitating a more effective and comprehensive response and the effective execution of peacekeeping mandates.

In that connection, El Salvador believes that mine action should be included as an integral part of the mandates of peace operations, based on the specific situation of the host country, and include the development and implementation of comprehensive victim and survivor assistance policies and plans.

In such policies and plans, we believe that it is essential to include a gender perspective, as well as the meaningful participation of victims, women and young people, in order to remove barriers to effective mine action. In addition, having information on how mine action plans take into account the different needs and perspectives of each sector of the affected communities will enable more rapid progress in the right direction and ensure better use of available resources.

El Salvador believes that including this item on the agenda of the Security Council and as an integral part of the regular reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the Council on various population groups, as well as the protection of civilians, will contribute to the implementation and adjustment of policies and programmes on the elimination of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices and help to improve future mandates.

While significant progress has been made, contamination from anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices remains an obstacle to sustainable development. In that regard, we reiterate the need to build synergies for the benefit of affected communities and for close coordination between the Security Council and the various stakeholders, in particular international mine action agencies, so as to better assist victims and survivors.

Finally, in view of its effective mine action, El Salvador calls for the universalization of the Ottawa Convention and for increased capacities, resources and financial assistance at the national, regional and international levels towards realizing the objectives of mine clearance, saving lives, protecting communities, assisting victims and promoting sustainable development in affected areas and communities.

## Annex 37

### **Statement by the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, in its capacity as observer**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

I welcome this open debate on the “Maintenance of international peace and security: mine action and sustaining peace — stronger partnerships for better delivery”, which is of the utmost relevance at this time. Mines and explosive remnants of war continue to affect the lives of millions of civilians across the world, including access to humanitarian assistance in many contexts. They also have a significant impact on the achievement of sustainable development, peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts.

The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to supporting actions addressing the threats of anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The European Union remains focused on the full spectrum of minefield identification, clearance of landmines, including those of an improvised nature, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, stockpile destruction, explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, advocacy for a mine-free world and capacity-building, all provided for under the 2019 Oslo Action Plan.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention, has become a success story for disarmament policy, with a total of 164 countries bound by the treaty. With all its Member States being parties to the Convention, the European Union is strongly united in banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Convention is an example of what the European Union stands for: a rules-based international order, rooted in respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. The European Union calls on all States that are not parties to the Convention, in particular major possessors of anti-personnel mines, to follow a self-declared policy of non-use in order to contribute to the universalization of the Ottawa Convention and to consider signing and ratifying the Convention.

The European Union and its member States have a long history of support for mine action that benefits nearly all heavily mine-affected countries and regions of the world, in accordance with the humanitarian principles. The total assistance provided by the European Union and its member States in the past five years amounts to more than €800 million, or \$940 million. On the EU project side, more than €68 million, or \$80 million, was committed in 2019 to various programmes in 11 mine-affected countries, such as the recent projects in Afghanistan, on risk education, Libya, on victim assistance, Sri Lanka, on mine clearance, and Ukraine, on victim assistance.

In order to support the Oslo Action Plan for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, on 18 February the European Union adopted Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/257, defining a concrete action plan to achieve a mine-free world by 2025.

Regarding IEDs, we reiterate our support for building global awareness of the wide-ranging aspects of the IED threat and the importance of a comprehensive approach. We call on all States to adopt and implement more stringent national measures to prevent the supply of weapons and explosives precursors to terrorists.

We must place human life, human dignity and human rights at the core of our work. The increasing use of improvised explosive devices poses serious and new challenges for the prevention, detection, render-safe procedure and disposal of those devices. Even though IEDs are often used in targeted attacks against security forces, they disproportionately affect civilians, as civilians account for the vast majority of casualties, of whom children represent nearly half.

Although some mines and explosive remnants of war share their indiscriminate character with IEDs, the required action differs. Addressing the IED threat requires identification and disruption of the networks and supply chains responsible in order to stop the proliferation of knowledge, materials, modus operandi and assembling techniques. Enhanced international cooperation and partnerships to improve network analysis and information-sharing is key to enabling an effective approach.

While mine clearance programmes have a definite end, victim assistance is an ongoing issue that requires both short- and long-term solutions. The European Union's humanitarian aid supports mine action, where appropriate, in accordance with the humanitarian principles. We also work with assistance organizations and the national authorities in affected countries to use available resources effectively and to contribute to integrating victim assistance into broader disability and development policies at the national level. In that context, the European Union is actively supporting the efforts of States parties to implement their victim assistance actions.

Moreover, mine action is key to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore emphasize the importance of linking the Sustainable Development Goals and development strategies with mine action. The European Union is particularly committed to mainstreaming a gender- and age-sensitive approach in its own mine action and by supporting the work of stakeholders in their humanitarian mine-action policies, including the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

The world is now facing a daunting pandemic but the threats posed by the coronavirus disease should not undermine all previous efforts. We need to strengthen our support. Even amid this unprecedented crisis, we cannot walk back on our obligations and commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings of the scientific and medical community show that by working together to fight the pandemic, it is possible to overcome it. That demonstrates that, with the adequate spirit, we can achieve the ambitious goals set out in the 2019 Oslo Action Plan.

## Annex 38

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Germany aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 36). As the current Chair of the multilateral Mine Action Support Group for the period 2020 to 2021, Germany makes the following additional remarks in its national capacity.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on the "Maintenance of international peace and security: mine action and sustaining peace — stronger partnerships for better delivery". Four years after the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017), explosive ordnance continues to pose a consistent and growing threat to international peace and security, the safety and security of people living in affected areas and the potential for sustainable development.

As a staunch supporter of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Germany's strategy for humanitarian mine action outlines action towards a mine-free world, in which vulnerable communities are protected, their needs are met and their dignity is secured.

Germany reaffirms its strong commitment to the Conventions and to supporting actions that address the threat of explosive ordnance. Germany especially appreciates having the United Nations Mine Action Service, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations as partners in that collective endeavour.

In the light of the global coronavirus disease pandemic and growing humanitarian needs, competition for funding has increased. Yet sustained support for mine action is needed to improve the safety of affected populations, to ensure humanitarian access and to reduce the socioeconomic impact. Germany stands ready to take responsibility. Having been one of the largest donors on humanitarian mine action in 2019, Germany continued its extensive engagement in 2020 by funding 33 humanitarian mine-action and stabilization projects in 13 countries, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Syria, with almost \$60 million. One important pillar of those programmes is victim assistance, an important obligation under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In 2020, Germany supported victim assistance to the tune of approximately 30 per cent of its annual budget for humanitarian mine action.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) cause thousands of casualties worldwide each year. In 2019, more than 5,500 persons were injured or lost their lives due to explosive ordnance. Even years after a conflict has ended, explosive threats bring dreadful harm, instil fear and stop refugees and internally displaced persons from returning to their homes. Mines deprive entire regions of a fair chance at economic recovery and development, and survivors remain stuck in poverty because of the lack of rehabilitation services for their injuries. In addition, new threats continue to affect the lives of thousands of people around the world.

IEDs pose serious threats to the safety and security of peacekeepers in United Nations missions, as well as the local population. The high number of IED attacks conducted by terrorist and criminal networks is extremely concerning. IEDs affect United Nations operations — for example, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which has had to deal with several cases of IEDs directed against civilians and United Nations personnel. They hamper the movement of missions and can have a negative impact on the execution of their mandate.

In order to respond to those challenges, Germany believes in a multisectoral approach covering all pillars of mine action: coordination, mine risk education, stockpile destruction, advocacy, survey and clearance and victim assistance.

We furthermore advocate for worldwide adherence to international humanitarian law and its instruments, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols II and V, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We urge all States Members of the United Nations to accede to those international norms and provisions. We commend those that have already done so, as well as those that engage in the field and assist affected States in their mine action efforts.

As the current Chair of the multilateral Mine Action Support Group for the period 2020 to 2021 and initiator of a country coalition with Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019, Germany also encourages stronger coordination to render mine action more effective. In that spirit, Germany will co-host, together with the United Nations Mine Action Service, the virtual twenty-fourth International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers in May 2021.

Mine action needs to be kept on the agenda of the decision-making bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. We therefore welcome the opportunity provided by this open debate. Mine awareness and mine action are a prerequisite to access and ultimately protect people in need, quite often the most vulnerable. Effective mine action is essential for building peace and sustainable development.

That is why, in accordance with resolution 2365 (2017), when planning special political and peacekeeping missions, the Security Council needs to consider mine action in a timely manner to prevent and reduce suffering and enable and sustain peace and sustainable development. Relevant United Nations personnel must be adequately equipped, informed and trained to that end.

The Security Council should also remind all parties to armed conflicts of their obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly their responsibility to protect civilian populations.

Germany intends to continue its efforts to provide this issue with the great attention it deserves.



**Annex 39****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Guatemala is very grateful to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for convening this open debate, which provides an update on the issues faced by mine-affected countries, particularly those in conflict and post-conflict situations, in order to strengthen coordination to eradicate the ongoing threat posed by explosive remnants of war, landmines and improvised explosive devices. Addressing those remaining threats clearly contributes to the safety of populations with a view to building peace and conditions conducive to development.

Guatemala has been a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention, since September 1999. We reaffirm our firm commitment to compliance with the Ottawa Convention, which is consistent with our national legislation, particularly the Law on the Prohibition of the Production, Purchase, Sale, Import, Export, Transit, Use and Possession of Anti-Personnel Mines and Anti-Detection Mechanisms, or Parts Thereof, adopted in 1997.

After the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in 1996, Guatemala was supported by the Organization of American States through an international programme called the Mission for the Removal of Mines in Central America, which conducted an awareness-raising and public-information campaign and provided technical support for Central America to become an anti-personnel-mine-free zone in 2010. Fortunately, our country did not have a problem specifically related to mines, but with other explosive devices scattered across the territory, and, precisely thanks to collaboration with international partners, an outreach and awareness-raising initiative was carried out to protect the most vulnerable population. All this was done in line with one of the agreements that ended the armed conflict: the Agreement for the Resettlement of Populations Uprooted by the Armed Conflict.

Based on our national history, we agree with what your delegation states in the concept note (S/2021/284, annex): mine action must be a fundamental pillar of peace and security, which should involve Member States as those with principal responsibility, the United Nations system as a whole and non-governmental organizations.

We are grateful for the invaluable cooperation carried out by the United Nations Mine Action Service, whose earlier strategies have achieved concrete results. We are pleased to learn that the United Nations Mine Strategy 2019-2023 sets out a long-term perspective, and we call for the continued prioritization of assistance to victims and their needs.

From our national perspective, we recognize it a priority to include victims of explosive ordnance in national disability strategies so as to strengthen comprehensive support to victims so their talents can actively contribute to their communities and societies.

**Annex 40****Statement by the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia**

The Holy See congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and is pleased with the chosen topic for today's open debate: "Mine action and sustaining peace — stronger partnership for better delivery".

In a letter from the Vatican dated 24 March and addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, His Holiness Pope Francis wrote the following:

"On the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, to be held this year on 4 April 2021, I offer prayerful good wishes for this important initiative of the United Nations Organization.

"It is my hope that this yearly observance will lead to a greater awareness of the devastating long-term effects of landmines and other antipersonnel weapons on innocent civilians and entire communities. I urge leaders of nations and other international organizations to cooperate in taking the necessary decisions that will lead to a world free of these destructive devices, so that all persons, especially the most vulnerable, can live in peace, security and stability, in service to the good of all and care for our common home.

"I likewise express my gratitude to the United Nations personnel and to all engaged in the dangerous work of mine-clearing and in assisting those who have experienced injury and the death of loved ones from landmines. Upon all I cordially invoke God's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace."

Furthermore, last Sunday, on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, which coincided with Easter Sunday, Pope Francis, during his special Message to the City and to the world said:

"Today, April 4, marks the International Awareness Day against anti-personnel landmines, insidious and horrible devices that kill or maim many innocent people each year and prevent humanity from "walking together on the paths of life without fearing the threat of destruction and death!" How much better our world would be without these instruments of death!"

It is the hope of the Holy See that today's timely debate will make a positive contribution towards freeing our world from such instruments of death.

**Annex 41****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Indonesia to the United Nations, Mohammad Kurniadi Koba**

We thank Viet Nam for convening the ministerial-level open debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their presentations.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to pose major threats to human life, security and humanitarian efforts in many countries. Indonesia underlines the importance of a comprehensive approach in addressing these threats through robust partnerships among all relevant stakeholders. In this connection, I would like to share the following points.

First, it is important to strengthen the legal framework for mine action. Indonesia wishes to emphasize the importance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as the most important instrument to address this issue. As a party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Indonesia calls for the full and effective implementation of the Convention and its action plans to achieve our common goal for a mine-free world by 2025. We also encourage countries that have not joined to ratify the Convention.

The Security Council has a critical role to play in mobilizing greater support for more effective mine action. The involvement of civil society, women and youth to support collective efforts in mine action is also important with a view to promoting more comprehensive and inclusive mine action at all levels.

Secondly, capacity-building and international assistance are crucial. Strong national capacity is key to developing a long-term sustainable response to landmines, explosive remnants of war and IED threats. This includes creating effective safeguards over explosives and materials that may be used by non-State actors and terrorist groups. The same notion applies to landmine clearance operations and victims' rehabilitation, along with long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Peacekeeping missions can play a role by providing training and mentoring programmes for the host States in this area. Member States could also provide support, including through the provision of technical, financial and other relevant assistance. In this regard, we commend the United Nations Mine Action Service, other relevant United Nations entities, regional organizations and civil society organizations for their important work in addressing these threats.

In the South-East Asia region, cooperation to address landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs is one of the priorities under the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) political and security cooperation. In 2016, the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center was established in Phnom Penh with the objective of collectively tackling the humanitarian aspects of landmines through sharing of experiences, training and capacity-building and partnership with relevant institutions.

Thirdly, mine action should be integrated into United Nations peacekeeping operations. The indiscriminate use of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs has caused a significant number of fatalities and injuries among peacekeepers and affected the work of peacekeeping missions in fulfilling their mandates. In line with resolution 2365 (2017), mine action should be considered early in the mandate formulation of peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

The capacity of peacekeeping missions to deter and counter landmine, explosive remnants of war and IED threats should be strengthened. Adequate resources must be provided in this regard. Missions should also be equipped with the

necessary intelligence and surveillance capabilities. It is critical that peacekeepers be equipped with necessary risk awareness and skills to deal with the threats, through both predeployment and in-mission training.

To conclude, addressing the threats of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs is critical to saving human lives, ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers and supporting the work of peacekeeping operations. We should therefore redouble our efforts and strengthen partnerships for dealing with these challenges.

## Annex 42

### Statement by the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations

Thank you, Sir, for convening this important discussion today. It offers an opportunity to rekindle the attention to and resources for global mine action, an area in which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has direct experience as a humanitarian organization and in its expertise in international humanitarian law.

Landmines and cluster munitions, as well as explosive remnants of war more broadly, have distinct catastrophic effects on conflict-torn societies. The price in civilian casualties is not only felt during active hostilities but lingers for many years, even decades, after the end of hostilities. In 2020, the United Nations recorded 4,663 civilian casualties from landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, comprising 80 per cent of total casualties from these weapons. Children were particularly affected — 25 per cent of child casualties in armed conflicts were caused by these weapons. Besides deaths and life-altering injuries, these weapons cause long-term trauma, with psychological and physical rehabilitation needs, and socioeconomic impact.

Mine action is generally considered to comprise five core components: clearance, risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction. It plays an important role in reducing civilian harm, making communities safer and enabling humanitarian access. Humanitarian demining can also serve as an important confidence-building measure in the lead-up to peacebuilding. Finally, mine action is instrumental to enable the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and create conducive conditions for the restoration of livelihoods and sustainable socioeconomic development.

While significant progress has been made through mine action, challenges persist. According to Mine Action Review, more than 50 countries remain contaminated by anti-personnel mines and more than 20 countries suffer from cluster-munition-remnant contamination. They pose a daily threat to civilians, hampering agriculture, trade and development, and hindering humanitarian operations. Landmines and cluster munitions, be they industrially manufactured or improvised, continue to be used in today's armed conflicts, causing unacceptable levels of civilian casualties and leaving behind long-term explosive hazards, in particular in urban and other populated areas.

In 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2365 (2017) which set out a comprehensive approach to mine action. The international community must redouble its efforts to address the challenges facing mine action. To do that, Member States must take five immediate actions.

First, Member States must join and faithfully implement the existing and robust international instruments governing these weapons. We call on all States that have not yet done so to join, without delay, the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the 2003 Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. These treaties find their roots in international humanitarian law and have been largely successful in protecting civilians from the indiscriminate harm caused by these weapons. We strongly encourage all States and parties to armed conflicts to renounce using, producing, transferring or stockpiling mines and cluster munitions.

Secondly, Member States must place victims and affected communities at the centre of mine action to reduce their suffering. The lifelong needs of survivors and their families must be met, taking into account gender, age and diversity factors,

and their full, equal and effective participation in society facilitated. However, far too often, they have struggled to access services and to be fully included in their societies. Victim assistance is a long-term commitment that requires sustained mobilization of resources and political will from States with significant numbers of survivors and those in a position to provide support.

Thirdly, Member States must elaborate informed, coordinated and well planned humanitarian and development responses to address contamination with mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war. A key element of such a response is the gathering of data. Mine action must be evidence-based to effectively respond to the problems facing affected communities. Data is essential to identify risks, set priorities, craft appropriate activities and, ultimately, allow for the most efficient use of resources. One example is Iraq, where the ICRC, working with the Iraqi Red Crescent, established a data-collection tool and process in part of the country since 2019. In agreement with the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action, we are aiming to expand this project nationally, with a view to improving information sharing and facilitating closer coordination with other humanitarian actors and local authorities.

Fourthly, Member States must invest in risk education as a critical element to protect civilians from the dangers of mines and explosive remnants of war pending their eventual clearance. Increasing awareness, however, is just part of the solution. Many communities already know that they are in a dangerous environment but are driven to dangerous areas largely by economic necessity. To be fully effective, awareness-raising must be coupled with interventions to enable communities to live more safely in contaminated settings, and should be incorporated into longer-term livelihood, economic and social-security programming. Examples include providing or restoring a safe water supply when water access is made dangerous because of mines and explosive remnants of war, and granting microloans or training and equipment for alternative income generation in places where it is common to gather scrap metal or enter dangerous areas to forage. To ensure their chance of success, such responses must be designed in cooperation with the affected communities themselves.

Finally, Member States must take national ownership to address the human cost of these weapons. In the meantime, progress would also require substantial, consistent and long-term support from those States and organizations in the position to provide assistance, both financially and technically. Ensuring a long-term national response capacity is critical as is close cooperation between all relevant institutions. This includes ensuring adequate dialogue between national mine-action authorities, international and local mine-action operators, military forces and community actors, such as national red cross and red crescent societies.

The ICRC stands ready to support States and other stakeholders to take practical measures to achieve progress in fulfilling long-standing commitments to protect civilians and their communities from the indiscriminate harm caused by mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war.

Much of the ICRC's work in relation to mines and explosive remnants of war focuses on developing the capacity of national red cross and red crescent societies to work alongside national authorities that carry out mine-action work domestically. National red cross and red crescent societies are often in a good position to work with local communities, gather data and conduct risk-awareness and safer-behaviour interventions, especially in areas that may be difficult for other organizations to access. In Syria, for example, 10 teams of staff and volunteers of the Syrian Red Crescent Society, trained by the ICRC, have been working in difficult-to-access areas, such as Aleppo, Idlib, Homs and Al-Hasakah. The ICRC also helps national mine-action authorities strengthen their ability to undertake humanitarian mine and

explosive remnant of war clearance and risk-reduction measures, in accordance with international standards, and provides blast trauma-care training for health personnel and first responders during explosive ordnance-assessment or -disposal operations.

The ICRC also undertakes specific initiatives to prevent and address the effects of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, including the physical disabilities they may cause. Over the past 40 years, by developing national capacities and directly providing rehabilitation services, the ICRC Physical Rehabilitation Programme has supported nearly 2 million persons with disabilities, including survivors of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, in more than 50 countries around the world.

At the multilateral level, the ICRC is available to provide its insight as a humanitarian organization and its expertise in international humanitarian law.

**Annex 43****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

Landmines and explosive remnants of war pose a challenge to the security and sustainable development of some countries. To mitigate their associated risks, protect lives and create safe conditions for socioeconomic activities, a comprehensive plan that focuses on demining and includes efforts, such as capacity-building, training and awareness-raising, is required.

The timely and effective implementation of such plans requires, among other things, skilled human resources, various types of advanced equipment and adequate financial resources. Nevertheless, unfortunately, many of the countries facing the challenges of landmines and explosive remnants of war lack such capacities.

In this context, the Non-Aligned Movement, in the final documents of its successive summits and ministerial meetings, has called upon all States in the position to do so, to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to landmine clearance operations, the social and economic rehabilitation of victims, as well as to ensure full access of affected countries to material equipment, technology and financial resources for mine clearance. This cannot be overemphasized.

As a result of Saddam Hussein's aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, five provinces of our country have immensely been affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war, seriously inhibiting the reconstruction of those provinces, hampering the socioeconomic development of the affected cities and villages, delaying the safe return of internally displaced persons and causing the martyrdom or wounding of many of our citizens.

Despite suffering from the United States' unlawful unilateral sanctions, hampering our access to necessary equipment and technologies and preventing us from receiving international assistance, we have relied on our zealous human resources and, using indigenously produced equipment and new demining methods, conducted a large-scale mine-clearance operation.

As a result, we have neutralized and destroyed over 3 million mines and explosive remnants of war and decontaminated most of the contaminated areas, enabling the promotion of agricultural, transportation, mining and other projects in such areas.

Building upon such precious hard-won experience, currently more than 60 Iranian private companies continue demining in Iran and also are assisting other countries in the region to address the threats to them resulting from landmines and explosive remnants of war. In recent years, we have also established an international centre for education on humanitarian mine action.

As a step towards further enhancing regional cooperation in humanitarian mine action, an international seminar — co-sponsored by Iran Mine Action Center and the International Committee of the Red Cross — was held from 8 to 11 March 2019 in Tehran, wherein mine action-related institutions from 13 regional countries and a number of relevant regional and international organizations, including the United Nations Mine Action Service, actively participated.

The application of sanctions on the transfer of mine-clearance technologies and equipment to certain mine-afflicted countries seriously undermines their national capacity in mine action. Given the humanitarian nature of mine action, such sanctions are unjust and unacceptable and must therefore be removed immediately. Instead, the access of mine-stricken nations to the machinery and technology necessary for speedy and effective mine-clearance operations must be facilitated.



Taking into account the threat that mines and explosive remnants of war pose to the lives of United Nations peacekeeping personnel, the Council must continue to consider this issue in the mandates of peacekeeping operations. However, it is evident that the involvement of peacekeeping forces in mine clearance does not provide any mandate to the Council to put the subject of mine action under its purview.

Owing to the serious humanitarian and socioeconomic nature of mine action, it remains under the purview of the General Assembly, which must therefore continue to upgrade its relevant functions, including in post-conflict situations.

Mine-clearance activities, whether in the context of peacekeeping operations or otherwise, must be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principles of full respect for the sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

To ensure that mine-action operations contribute effectively to sustaining peace and socioeconomic development of the societies that are facing the challenges of mines and explosive remnants of war, enhanced international cooperation and assistance, upon request, is a must. This should therefore be a key priority area for the relevant United Nations bodies.

To that end, the Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to extend its cooperation in humanitarian mine action with countries in the region and beyond, to share its experiences, exchange technical experts and expertise, hold training courses and implement demining projects.

## Annex 44

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations

First of all, let me thank Viet Nam for convening this open debate and the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Italy aligns itself with the statement submitted by the delegation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer (annex 36), and would like to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

Italy shares the deep concern of the international community at the growing and indiscriminate use of landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which pose serious threats to civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping personnel in conflict-afflicted and post-conflict areas. Some missions, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, are especially plagued by this threat, which accounts for a large part of fatalities among the Blue Helmets.

According to the *Landmine Monitor 2020*, 2019 was the fifth year in a row with high numbers of recorded casualties due to the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines, including IEDs. The data provided by this source are too worrying to ignore: the vast majority (80 per cent) of recorded casualties were civilians, of whom 43 per cent were children. This is clearly a trend that needs to be interrupted and one that Italy will always condemn at every opportunity, appealing to all State and non-State actors to put an end to the use of mines.

At present, serious concerns are raised by the widespread use of these types of weapons by non-State actors, who are also able to produce them themselves or to resort to circumstantial devices known as improvised explosive devices. This threat still affects about 60 countries and territories in conflict or post-conflict situations, and its consequences extend well beyond the physical impairment of victims: it undermines the peace, security and stability of States and impedes sustainable socioeconomic development.

The extensive and ever-present threat posed by landmines, ERW and IEDs makes mine action critical to the peace and security agenda. Mine action is a particularly dynamic area of great activism, with ambitious goals that — although now faced with the constraints of the pandemic — remain the focus of international attention. The contribution of mine action to stability and security is valuable, both for conflict management and, perhaps even more so, for the post-conflict phase, to ensure peace and sustainable development. These are all dimensions that characterize Italian foreign policy and Italy's commitment in the world.

Italy is strongly committed to supporting mine action programmes globally in order to improve the conditions of thousands of vulnerable people who are still risking their lives in contaminated areas. To this end, a dedicated national trust fund for humanitarian demining was set up by law 10 years ago, allowing the allocation of resources to mine action projects relating to anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war. Since then, Italy has invested more than €62 million in mine action programmes, with a particular focus on clearance, risk education and assistance to victims. Italy is doubling its contribution to the mine action activities in 2021, in order to provide sustained and continuous funding to such an important sector.

Italy supports programmes in the most deteriorated crisis areas, such as Libya, Yemen and Syria. We also support initiatives in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, the Sudan, Colombia and Palestine. In addition, we are planning to support the Association of Southeast Asian Countries Regional Mine Action Centre in a risk education project targeting Viet Nam, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.

Italy's involvement in mine action is multifold and a product of our holistic approach, namely, that international assistance should not be limited to mere financial support but also encompass the sharing of experience, knowledge and practical know-how so as to improve safety and reduce violence. On this point let me recall the involvement of the Italian armed forces operating abroad in the clearance of improvised explosive devices and explosive ordnance disposal, as well as the support of a dedicated national centre of excellence for countering all types of explosives devices, which has also been engaged in training and capacity-building activities with third countries.

Italy remains deeply convinced of the important role of international cooperation and assistance as part of our comprehensive approach to mine action. Cooperation at all levels — with the United Nations, other international and regional organizations, civil society and survivors' organizations — is an effective way to fully implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, while maximizing the contribution and impact of all the available expertise and knowledge.

Although the goal of a mine-free world by 2025 remains ambitious, it remains an important political and awareness-raising factor. It is essential to continue to make every effort to promote adherence by as many countries as possible to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, while building on the role played by international cooperation and the high level of involvement that exists in civil society.

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**Annex 45****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Kimihiro Ishikane**

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting, and I am grateful to the briefers for their remarks.

The Security Council is actively engaged on mine action, as embodied in resolution 2365 (2017), adopted by consensus in 2017, which Japan co-sponsored as a member of the Security Council at that time. Regrettably, though, mines and other explosives continue to cause casualties around the world, particularly in conflict areas such as Afghanistan and Yemen. It is therefore of great importance that the Council revisit this critical topic to renew its determination to tackle this threat to the peace, security and stability of States.

At the same time, mines are first and foremost a serious threat to human security. It was the human security concerns advocated by civil society that paved the way for the adoption of the Ottawa Convention and its entry into force, in 1999. Despite significant progress over the past two decades, including the steady destruction of stockpiles and continual decreases of minefields in most affected countries, landmines continue to threaten the lives, livelihoods and dignity of local populations and hinder the realization of human security.

According to Landmine Monitor, at least 5,554 casualties of mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices combined, including 2,170 deaths, were recorded in 2019 in 55 States and other areas. Mine action saves lives. Effective mine action also contributes to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and honouring our commitment to leaving no one behind. Human security should be an integral part of our considerations when seeking progress on mine action.

Japan has long made mine action support a diplomatic priority. Japan emphasizes three areas, that is, continuous support to countries that are seriously affected by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance, the promotion of regional and South-South cooperation and comprehensive support to victims and survivors.

In 2019 alone, we provided assistance in 23 countries and regions, amounting to approximately \$37 million, in collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and other related international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Our overall contribution to mine action programmes in the five years up to 2019 amounted to more than \$212 million. Most recently, in February, Japan decided to contribute over \$4 million to UNMAS for enhancing the counter-improvised explosive device (IED) and explosive ordnance disposal capabilities of the Somali police force, so that more Somalis will be protected against the threat of IEDs.

The international targets on mine action were renewed at the fourth Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, held in 2019. Japan is fully committed to contributing to the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan towards realizing “a mine-free world to the fullest extent possible” by 2025 and will continue to support victims and survivors. Japan also calls on all States that have not signed and concluded the Ottawa Convention to do so at the earliest opportunity. Japan will continue to play an active role on mine action in collaboration with the United Nations, Member States and civil society organizations.

**Annex 46****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Libya to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you for holding this open debate and salute your choice of the topic of measures relating to mines, the remnants of war, the risks they pose and the proactive international response they demand.

There can be no doubt that landmines and explosives pose an ongoing deadly threat. Long after conflicts are over, they put the lives and security of civilians at risk. These indiscriminate weapons know no difference between the boots of soldiers and the feet of innocent children and women. They undermine the prospects for peace, security and stability in the affected countries and block their paths to sustainable social and economic development.

It is a matter of concern that, according to United Nations reports, there has been an upward trend in deaths and injuries from mines in many conflict zones. Meanwhile, global funding needs for major activities such as clearing mine-contaminated land, raising risk awareness and assisting victims are at record levels that are difficult to meet.

In order to reverse these growing challenges and risks posed by the increased proliferation of mines and explosive remnants of war and to address their effects and repercussions, we believe that it is important to take into account the following.

International efforts to prevent, resolve and de-escalate conflicts in various regions around the world must be stepped up. That requires the kind of resolute international political will that is capable of putting an end to the detrimental foreign interventions that so often fan the flames of those conflicts. The illegal and dangerous actions of the parties to such conflicts include planting mines and explosive devices, often in populated residential areas.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — known as the Ottawa Convention — is an important international instrument for addressing this problem. However, it does not impose any legal obligations on States that insert themselves in other countries' wars and plant various types of mines in various regions. It does not require them to provide maps, demining assistance or compensation for human and material damages. For the Convention to become universal, this lacuna must be addressed by an additional protocol that responds to these concerns, which have been expressed on numerous occasions by numerous States.

It is important to bear in mind that mine action, along with everything it entails, is an indispensable prerequisite for any peace process. It makes a practical contribution to building trust between parties to a conflict and provides mine-affected peoples and societies with opportunities and a suitable environment to make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

United Nations reports confirm that national efforts by mine-affected countries to find solutions to this problem are facing daunting challenges. Greater partnership and solidarity are needed. Regional and international cooperation must be strengthened. Adequate funding and increased coordination and cohesion among relevant agencies within the United Nations system are needed to ensure a more effective response to escalating mine challenges.

It is important to encourage affected countries to improve their national mine action management systems. The United Nations must respond to their needs for technical and material assistance and training and rehabilitation resources.

My own country, Libya, is among those that have suffered and continue to suffer from mines and the remnants of war. Numerous human tragedies are still occurring around the country because of mines left behind by combatant States from the Second World War. Those States' responses continue to be virtually non-existent as far as providing assistance to help identify and clear minefields that more than likely will cause further death and injury and interfere with development and investment projects in those areas.

The situation has only been exacerbated by the conflict and armed confrontations that have taken place during the difficult transitional period witnessed in the country, in the course of which the excessive use of mines and explosives has caused heavy material and human losses. The permanent ceasefire agreement reached by the 5+5 Joint Military Commission in October 2020 provided a strong and effective boost to national efforts to eliminate mines and explosive remnants of wars. That agreement provides for the removal of all mines that have been laid and is currently being implemented on the ground.

At the same time, there has been coordination with the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to raise awareness of the dangers posed by mines, provide assistance to the families of the killed and injured and develop ways for the health and education sectors to incorporate a response to the challenges posed by explosive weapons into their national programmes. The Libyan Mine Action Centre, within its modest resources, is working to develop a strategy to assist victims of these weapons. These efforts require support and encouragement in the form of enhanced human and institutional resources and the provision of technical assistance to make sure that the country can rid itself of these deadly and destructive weapons.

Lastly, allow us to reaffirm the commitment of Libya to continuing coordination, cooperation and solidarity with international efforts to reduce the risk of mines and explosive weapons at all levels.

**Annex 47****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations**

[Original: French]

At the outset, I would like to thank Viet Nam for having organized this Security Council open debate on the crucial issue of combating landmines. I should also like to thank the briefers for their detailed statements, as well as the Secretary-General for his support in the fight against landmines.

The Security Council attaches major importance to this issue, as illustrated by its adoption of resolution 2365 (2017) and today's presidential statement S/2021/PRST/8. Unfortunately, the existence of anti-personnel landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war continues to take a heavy toll on civilians and to hinder the consolidation of lasting peace in many parts of the world.

Peacekeeping operations and the work of humanitarian personnel are also heavily impacted by the dangers associated by improvised explosive devices. Morocco salutes the efforts made by the United Nations Mine Action Service as well as by the host of partners engaged in this work.

In the context of its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, Morocco attaches the greatest importance to the training of its troops so that they can carry out their mandate in the best of conditions. Moreover, Morocco works and coordinates closely with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), including on this issue, to clear areas contaminated by the Polisario Front separatist group.

With regard to international law, Morocco signed and ratified the host of international instruments in the area of disarmament. Although we are not a signatory to the Ottawa Convention, Morocco fully subscribes to its humanitarian principles and disarmament goals. That commitment is reflected in our implementation of the Convention's provisions, in particular our voluntary submission of national transparency reports since 2006.

Morocco's efforts go back to 1975 and were strengthened following an agreement with MINURSO in 1999. Based on the experience acquired in this area, Morocco focuses its anti-mine strategy of the following elements.

First, with regard to efforts on mine destruction and demining, in line with our international commitments, Morocco has deployed 13 demining modules on an ongoing basis and carried out 964 emergency interventions between 2014 and 2020. Those efforts made possible the demining of 5,823 square kilometres and led to neutralizing 96,769 landmines and destroying 21,092 explosive remnants of war.

Secondly, on awareness-raising and education, the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces, the Moroccan Red Crescent, working with the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as civil society and the various ministerial departments concerned work together to regularly carry out awareness-raising campaigns. For example, in just the first quarter of 2020, nearly 10,000 people participated in education and awareness-raising campaigns that were comprised of 44 per cent women and 70 per cent young people. Morocco thereby emphasizes young people and women in raising awareness, as they are the main victims of incidents involving mines.

Thirdly, with regard to medical assistance, compensation and rehabilitation, full medical and psychological care for victims of mines and explosive remnants of war is provided. In addition, a Social Cohesion Support Fund supports persons with

disabilities, including the victims of mines and explosive remnants of war. Finally, all victims are compensated by Morocco with a budget of approximately \$3 million.

Aware of the importance of international cooperation in combating mines, the Kingdom is fully engaged in various international forums, with active participation by representatives of the various prefectures concerned. From 2012 to date, Morocco has participated in more than 100 activities, both nationally and internationally.

Every year, the Centre for Engineering Training and the Royal Armed Forces Rescue Unit receive a significant number of officers from various friendly countries for the purpose of furthering their training.

As you can see, mine action is a subject of utmost importance to Morocco, which is equipping itself with the means to fight against its devastating effects. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of training, international cooperation, victim support and awareness. With the support of the international community, Morocco is convinced that a mine-free world is not a utopia, but rather should be our common goal for the benefit of civilians and future generations.



## Annex 48

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations, Yoka Brandt**

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (annex 36) and would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

As you will know, the Netherlands has been designated President of the nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is a great honour and privilege for us to be working with all States parties, other States and interested organizations on this second year of the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. Our collective progress will be measured against the baseline we established at the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties. It is critical that we continue to strengthen our efforts and political commitment for the implementation of the action plan.

At the fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, in Oslo in 2019, we committed to strengthening our efforts in order to achieve our common goals of a mine-free world and the full and equal inclusion of survivors and victims. The Netherlands is fully committed to achieving progress in all areas of the Convention and to working with as many countries as possible to support their implementation efforts. In this context, the Netherlands would like to highlight the three themes that will be the thread throughout our presidency: capacity-building, innovation and inclusivity.

First, capacity-building is crucial if mine action is to be sustainable. This means that national authorities are equipped to take ownership of their national mine action programmes in order to safeguard their people from the threat of mines and to assist mine survivors. In the field of mine clearance, this means for example, that we must ensure that the International Mine Action Standards are implemented by adopting national mine action standards and ensuring that they are up to date. On mine risk reduction and education, we must ensure that the actions we agreed on in the Oslo Action Plan can be implemented adequately at the national level by local governments. On victim assistance, it means that there is sufficient national capacity to deal with the specific needs of mine survivors. But also, in order for the implementation of the Convention to be monitored and to increase transparency, national capacity to submit high quality transparency reports needs to be built. Lastly, in the field of international cooperation and assistance, apart from focusing on the individualized approach, in which we highlight individual cases of mine-affected countries and link them up to the donor community, we need to ensure that this is replicated and strengthened at the national level of these affected countries as well. Cooperation between national authorities, donors, mine action operators, the United Nations and other organizations, as well as other stakeholders, needs to be strengthened at the national and local level.

Secondly, innovation throughout mine action is a key pillar of our priorities, and the mine sector has shown to be an innovative community. For example, in mine risk-reduction and education programmes, innovative ideas to provide these programmes in conflict situations should be further explored. New digital technologies can also be used for mine risk education purposes, such as the use of social media and cooperation with social media companies. In the area of mine clearance, we advocate the development of new technologies to make mine clearance more effective, but also to improve land-releasing methodologies. On the retention of stockpiles for training purposes, we would like to encourage countries to use new technologies, such as 3D printing, to substitute live mines for so-called dummies. This allows for the destruction of all mines retained for training purposes in a country.

Lastly, our third priority theme is inclusivity. Mine action is only successful if done in an inclusive way. For victim assistance, this means that we do not only focus on physical assistance by among others providing prostheses, but we also ensure the psychosocial side of mine accidents are addressed by providing mental health and psychosocial support, for example through community projects. In the field of mine risk-reduction and education programmes, we ensure that we include all relevant stakeholders and take gender and diversity issues into account, when devising the strategies that should in the end serve and protect all. Lastly, and most importantly, it is important that no one be left behind when working towards the achievement of our goal of a mine-free world. All States parties should get a chance to achieve this, and we can only do this together with shared determination and political will.

These three themes will be our common thread as the Netherlands fulfils its mandate as the President of this important Convention.

The Netherlands has a long record of funding mine action worldwide with a view to saving lives, improving livelihoods and contributing to development and stabilization efforts. Multiannual planning of financing is important to enable implementers to operate in a cost-effective way and achieve better results. Our current multiannual Mine Action and Cluster Munitions Programme runs for the period 2020-2024 and is valued at €51 million. The programme has a strong focus on gender, diversity and inclusion, including through capacity-building, and aligns strongly with the Oslo Action Plan. Furthermore, the Netherlands is one of the larger donors to the United Nations Mine Action Service and also contributes to its Threat Mitigation Advisory Team with an expert on improvised explosive devices.

Apart from the many mine action priorities highlighted here, the universalization of the Convention has our special attention. Although the total number of ratifications and accessions to the Convention stands at a solid 164 States parties, 33 States are still not party to the Convention. We call upon these States that are not yet party to accede to the treaty and, in the meantime, to align their policies and practices to the principles of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention that represents the global norm against anti-personnel mines and to follow a self-declaratory policy of non-use. We invite these States to consider the many benefits that acceding to the Convention would bring them.

**Annex 49****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations**

I would like to congratulate Viet Nam on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and welcome its initiative to convene an open debate on this important issue.

While the international community, through joint efforts and cooperation, has achieved significant progress on mine action in recent years, national and international mine-action efforts are still confronted with numerous challenges. The year 2019 represented the fifth consecutive year with high numbers of recorded casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war, with the majority of casualties being civilians. The number of those maimed and mutilated is even higher.

Landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) also pose a major threat to United Nations peacekeepers and are responsible for a large proportion of casualties in peacekeeping operations. These devices restrict the mobility of United Nations peacekeepers, spread fear across communities and undermine peacekeeping mandates. Apart from death and injury, mines also undermine the ability of humanitarian workers to carry out their critical tasks.

Strengthening international cooperation in mine action is therefore key to reducing the threat to civilians and infrastructure posed by landmines and other explosives, to safeguarding peacekeeping missions and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. International assistance and cooperation in mine action should take into account national conditions and the needs of landmine-affected countries as well as the differences among States in terms of their security environments and military strengths. International assistance and cooperation must also strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and legitimate national military and security needs. At the same time, international efforts should strive to enhance the practical results of demining assistance and cooperation and ensure the provision to affected countries of new technologies in detecting and mitigating the threats posed by landmines.

As one of the largest troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Pakistan attaches great importance to addressing the challenges posed by landmines. Our peacekeepers continue to operate in many conflict zones where mines pose a grave threat to their safety and security and seriously undermine their ability to fulfil mission mandates. A number of Pakistani peacekeepers have been killed or injured due to mines and similar explosive devices.

The recent surge in attacks on and fatalities of peacekeepers necessitates making a more strategic assessment of the threat posed by IEDs, increasing the level of preparedness against the changing nature of the threat, enhancing the capabilities of peacekeepers, using new technologies in peacekeeping missions to avert this threat, and allocating adequate resources for the safety and security of peacekeepers. The development of strategies to mitigate this threat must involve close coordination, cooperation and involvement of the TCCs and police-contributing countries (PCCs). This can bring an invaluable perspective on threat dynamics and challenges on the ground based on operational experience. United Nations peacekeepers must receive constant updates on IED threats in their mission areas. There is also a need for greater engagement with host countries. Enhancing consultations with host countries and respecting their ownership should be part of a comprehensive approach to countering the IED threat. Moreover, training and capacity-building needs of host countries should be part of the response strategy.

Above all, the Security Council should continue to show firm determination in ensuring the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers in the light of the IED threat. Resolution 2365 (2017), which was adopted unanimously, fully demonstrates the priority that the international community attaches to addressing this challenge. Today's open debate is yet another opportunity for States Members of the United Nations to send a strong message of unity on the issue.

As a major TCC and PCC, Pakistan has rich experience in the development and implementation of a national counter-IED strategy. We have also successfully implemented regulatory measures to control precursor material usable in IEDs. Over the last two decades, our security forces have enhanced their capabilities in terms of IED awareness, jamming and disposal as well as in conducting forensics and other investigations. We have also established a school that provides state-of-the-art training in countering IEDs, explosives and munitions and invites participants from other countries.

Leveraging this capacity, Pakistan would like to offer counter-IED training for TCCs and PCCs at our counter-IED and peacekeeping-training centres. This endeavour is part of our effort to support a more coordinated and coherent United Nations response to IEDs in peacekeeping missions. Pakistan has actively participated in all efforts aimed at addressing the threat posed by mines and will continue to do so.

**Annex 50****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We welcome the initiative of the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council in convening today's high-level debate, and thank it for the concept note (S/2021/284), which invites us to identify new threats and challenges arising from the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and to propose concerted actions to help reduce the consequences of mines and IEDs. We also thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

We recognize the direct link between the issue before us today and the maintenance of international peace and security. Adequately addressing this link requires the committed participation of States at various levels, under the leadership of the United Nations. In taking on this commitment, Peru has been making its best efforts towards attaining the ultimate goal of a world free of this scourge.

It is regrettable to note that, despite some progress in recent decades, landmines and improvised explosive devices continue to pose a persistent threat to civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping troops. Year after year, the number of persons killed or maimed is in the tens of thousands, and it is particularly tragic that around a quarter of them are children. Bloody and protracted conflicts, exacerbated now by the coronavirus disease pandemic, fuel this unfortunate reality.

Against this precarious backdrop, we believe it is essential that a renewed sense of urgency be given to strengthening the cooperation among the United Nations, the States Members of the Organization, regional and subregional organizations, local authorities, victims, humanitarian workers, civil society and the potentially affected population, which should lead to more coherent responses that are adapted to the specificity of each scenario, the degree of development of national capacities, the setting of common standards and the promotion of synergies.

From our own experience, we can attest to the positive dynamics that emanate from common action in this area. Our armed forces today maintain an exemplary relationship of trust and cooperation with the armed forces of our sister Republic of Ecuador in joint mine-clearance activities on our border. Likewise, the activities in the areas of demining, dissemination and prevention activities, as well as reparation and assistance to mine victims — which the Peruvian State carried out in order to combat terrorism in the final decades of the twentieth century — are today generating a positive relationship with the communities most exposed to the violence of that period.

Specifically, we believe that the following elements could lead to a more effective, safe and efficient international response.

First, in terms of protecting civilians, it is essential to intensify efforts aimed at strengthening risk education and the identification of mines and improvised explosive devices for affected populations, particularly young people and children. We note the essential role that women can play in this regard, as they are more exposed to these threats in their daily activities and are more likely to share information with their children. This education also needs to be extended to peacekeepers, both before and after deployment. This is primarily the responsibility of the troop-contributing countries, but it is an area where the international community can make a significant contribution. We welcome the commendable work of the United Nations Mine Action Service in this and related areas. Similarly, it is imperative not to neglect assistance to victims — through timely medical care, the provision of prostheses and vocational training and employment promotion that will contribute to their social reintegration.

Secondly, improvised explosive devices, which are often used by non-State actors, are the main factor behind the increase in fatalities and injuries in recent years. We must therefore focus on the prevention and mitigation of their destructive effects, through concrete measures, including, inter alia, greater control of the traffic of their components at airports, seaports and border crossings, the drafting of manuals, the holding of debates and exchanges with experts.

Thirdly, in terms of universalizing international instruments and financing, enhanced cooperation also entails working together for the universal adoption and full implementation of relevant legal instruments, in particular the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In this regard, we underline the urgency of providing stable and predictable funding for the voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine action.

We consider that action against these particularly cruel, pernicious, vicious and indiscriminate weapons is a moral and legal obligation of the international community, which is called upon to contribute directly to fulfilling the responsibilities of the Security Council in terms of protecting civilians and maintaining international peace and security. Accordingly, we believe it is essential for the Council to become more actively involved in this issue, which entails, at the very least, taking it up on an annual basis through reports on the implementation of resolution 2365 (2017), addressing it in particular debates on affected countries and including it in the mandates of peace operations, special political missions and humanitarian assistance programmes.

## Annex 51

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations

Let me begin by congratulating the President and his team on their second presidency of the Security Council. I wish them every success and assure them of the full support of the Polish delegation.

Poland is highly committed to working towards a mine-free world and mitigating the negative impact of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, including improvised explosive devices, on civilian populations. We therefore welcome the initiative to hold today's open debate on mine action and sustaining peace.

We express our gratitude to the briefers for presenting their interesting perspectives. Poland aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (EU) (annex36).

Poland is proud to have shown its dedication to mine action. As the EU facilitator of the biannual General Assembly resolution on this vital topic, we have demonstrated our commitment to promoting collective efforts to seek durable solutions to the question of completely clearing anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war. We are honoured to take up this task once again at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

We underscore the need for protecting those civilians who are most vulnerable to the threats posed by anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war, among whom are children and youth as well as construction and agricultural workers. Risk education among affected populations can be particularly useful in this respect. We should also remember to provide an adequate response to the needs of survivors, with particular emphasis on persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, we would like to bring into focus the dire predicament of people who are constantly on the move, such as internally displaced persons. The presence of explosive hazards left behind by different armed groups continues to threaten the lives of millions of people who have been driven from their homes as a result of armed conflict. Let me also mention the negative impact of anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war on humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers.

We subscribe to the conviction that mine action is at the nexus of peace and security, development and humanitarian assistance. According to the most recent edition of *Landmine Monitor 2020*, at least 5,554 people across the globe were killed or injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war in 2019. Many more were denied access to food and water or to such basic services as health, education and employment. The delivery of safe and unimpeded humanitarian aid, where required, was hampered too. This is completely unacceptable in the twenty-first century, so we must incorporate mine action into planning and programming cycles in the early stages.

Without the provision of comprehensive clearance operations on the ground, we will not be able to protect innocent civilians affected by armed conflict. That having been said, since 2015, Poland has voluntarily provided funds to United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in support of actions dedicated to removing landmines and explosive remnants of war, as well as post-conflict reconstruction and risk-awareness implementation in the Gaza Strip. What started as an emergency response in Gaza continues today as a well-established programme with substantial achievements.

In the last two to three years there has been a drop in international funding for mine action. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic will most likely have

a negative long-term effect in this regard, including on the overall performance of such actors as UNMAS. Poland is making substantial efforts to maintain our level of funding, which sends an important message to the mine-affected States and shows our Government's continuous political commitment to assistance in mine action.

As an EU member State, Poland commits to the EU's complex strategies in support of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Through a new European Council decision, the EU will support the Convention as well as the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. The decision foresees projects focused on such relevant areas covered by the Convention, as the implementation of mine clearance (article 5), international cooperation and assistance (article 6) and actions in favour of victim assistance.

Poland sees the significance of contributing to mine action, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Such stakeholders as UNMAS can perform well under difficult circumstances and prove to be reliable partners in this endeavour. We see the practical value in the coordination and exchange of experiences in multi-stakeholder forums.

Poland recently joined the Mine Action Support Group. For us, the funding of mine action is an important component of our national development-assistance framework.

In closing, given that mine action is an absolutely crucial element to maintaining international peace and security and fostering sustainable development, we would like to encourage all States Members of the United Nations to consider stepping up their efforts to achieve the long-term goal of making this world a safer place with no landmines and no landmine casualties.



**Annex 52****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, Cho Hyun**

As we celebrate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action this month, my delegation commends the Vietnamese presidency for convening today's timely open debate on this critical issue. We also join others in expressing our deep appreciation to the briefers for their enlightening and informative briefings.

Resolution 2365 (2017) recognized the threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices while noting the positive contribution of mine-action activities to sustaining peace. Mine action is critical not only to the peace and security agenda but also to sustainable development and humanitarian response. In that regard, effective communication and strengthened partnership among the relevant actors is essential to tackling the persistent challenges and growing complexity of those threats.

The Republic of Korea shares the international community's concern over the severe challenges caused by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines. Owing to the unique security situation on the Korean peninsula, we are unable to accede to the Ottawa Convention at this juncture. However, we sincerely support the objectives and purposes of the Convention. In that regard, we wish to elaborate on the various efforts that we have been undertaking at the domestic and international levels to mitigate the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

First, we have been clearing anti-personnel mines, wherever possible, in a steady manner. The Government of the Republic of Korea is exercising tight control over anti-personnel landmines and has been maintaining an indefinite extension of the moratorium on their export since 1997.

Secondly, as a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II, the Republic of Korea is taking an active part in a range of discussions and activities to ensure the limited and responsible use of mines.

Thirdly, the Government of the Republic of Korea has contributed more than \$40 million to more than 25 countries since 1993, bilaterally as well as through relevant United Nations programmes, for demining and victim assistance, including the United Nations voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine action and the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance. The Republic of Korea will continue to contribute to international efforts for mine clearance and victim assistance.

Lastly, my delegation would like to draw your attention to the efforts for demining operations along the demilitarized zone of the Korean peninsula. Following the Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain annexed to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, the two Koreas removed landmines in the Joint Security Area and in certain areas of the Korean demilitarized zone, which were selected as the site to conduct a joint pilot search for remains from the Korean War.

At the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, in 2019, President Moon Jae-in set out his vision to transform the Korean demilitarized zone into an international peace zone, including by clearing landmines in the area with the support of the international community. The Republic of Korea will continue the dialogue and explore further opportunities for cooperation. In that regard, we would like to ask for continued support from the international community to help bring lasting peace to the Korean peninsula.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices have not only caused civilian casualties but also been significant contributors to fatalities among peacekeepers. It is important to better equip and train uniformed personnel to successfully detect and avoid those threats. The Republic of Korea hopes that the 2021 Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference to be held in Seoul this December can be an opportunity to explore strengthened partnership in this field with a view to enhancing the safety and security of peacekeeping operations.

**Annex 53****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Michal Mlynár**

I would like to thank you for having organized this important debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: Mine action and sustaining peace: Stronger partnerships for better delivery”, which will certainly raise awareness of the continued threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices to human lives, security and humanitarian efforts.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (EU) (annex 36). Allow me to make a few additional observations.

Mines and other explosive devices, including abandoned munitions and military equipment, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), as well as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), pose a hazard all over the world. Therefore, mine action makes an important contribution to peace, security and development.

Slovakia is a State party to the conventions with relevance to mine action. We strongly support actions that address the threats posed by anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention represents the global norm against anti-personnel mines, a norm that has saved thousands of lives and spared countless of children, who constitute the majority of mine victims. Slovakia supports the universal ban on anti-personnel mines. We appeal to all actors to refrain from the production, stockpiling, trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines and strongly condemn their use anywhere, anytime and by any actor, whether States or non-State actors. We consider the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention to be a key disarmament instrument. Its integrity, full implementation and strict application must be guaranteed and universal adherence pursued.

As regards various activity areas within mine action, Slovakia has been active in areas in which it has means and experience. We have been actively engaged in international cooperation and assistance, either on a bilateral basis or within the framework of the activities of international organizations. Slovakia contribution focused mainly on areas of training, capacity-building, mine clearance and the destruction of stocks of anti-personnel mines and other explosive devices, where its focus is on environmentally friendly and secure methods of disposal. The activities of Slovak troops in the area of demining, mainly in Afghanistan and Iraq, have contributed considerably to mine-action objectives.

Enhanced support on the part of the international community for preparation and training with respect to national capacities in the field of demining capabilities as part of the security-sector reform process will undoubtedly contribute to the mitigation of threats caused by ERW and mines. For many years already Slovakia has identified security-sector reform as being one of the key elements for effective conflict prevention and successful post-conflict rebuilding and stabilization.

We would like to encourage all decision-makers to make effective use of military-engineering capabilities in peacekeeping operations and to use specifically military demining capabilities to create a secure environment and provide training to enhance national capabilities, and to leave building and construction activities to the capabilities of host States.

Victim assistance is an ongoing issue that requires both short- and long-term solutions. In that context, we support the work of the EU carried out with assistance

organizations and national authorities in the countries affected so as to use available resources effectively and to contribute to integrating victim assistance into broader disability and development policies at the national level.

It is my pleasure to state that Slovakia recently contributed to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine action, which was established by the General Assembly to act as an accountable, fast-track, low-cost mechanism to rid the world of the threat of landmines. Slovakia has also provided a financial contribution to the IEDs Threat Mitigation Advisory Team project as well as to the United Nations Mine Action Service project addressing the threat posed by explosive ordnance in Iraq.

Mine action is key to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That is why we emphasize the importance of connecting the Sustainable Development Goals and development strategies with mine action. The world is currently facing a daunting pandemic, but the threat posed by the coronavirus disease should not be allowed to undermine all our previous efforts.

**Annex 54****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations, Darja Bavdaž Kuret**

I would like to thank the Government of Viet Nam for having convened this debate on mine action and sustaining peace. It is timely and relevant, particularly in the light of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, which we observed just a few days ago.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 36). I would like to add some points in our national capacity.

My country has a long history of support for mine action. That is why we are a long-standing and committed advocate for the universalization and full implementation of the Ottawa Convention. We believe that this is one of the most successful international agreements in the disarmament area. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly because of the many new and protracted conflicts around the world.

The Oslo Action Plan, adopted at the Fourth Review Conference of the State Parties to the Ottawa Convention, in 2019, provides an important political recommitment and offers a strong impetus for redoubling our joint efforts to implement the Convention in the coming years.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on our daily lives. However, that has not changed the fact that landmines continue to pose a constant threat, be it to civilians, peacekeepers or humanitarian personnel.

It is for that reason that we must stay true to our goal of a mine-free world during the ongoing health crisis. For Slovenia, it is important that our collective efforts, which are vital for saving thousands of lives, devote equal attention to the mutually reinforcing pillars, namely, to mine clearance, to victim assistance, to mine risk education and to advocacy.

Slovenia has always been an active supporter of and contributor to ITF Enhancing Human Security. We are especially pleased that that Slovenia-based non-profit organization has managed to maintain its operational capacity and presence on the ground across the world in these difficult times. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ITF implemented risk-education projects and raised awareness about mine danger in targeted areas.

Over the last 20 years ITF has, with the support of its donors, responded to the needs of children and adults affected by conflicts in various States and regions across the world, especially in the Western Balkans region. A number of projects have been implemented, with a focus on capacity-building and providing medical and psychosocial rehabilitation to victims, especially children. ITF also provided support to mine victims, particularly in Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip, since those were among the most vulnerable in the past months.

Let me also highlight ITF's activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. Two years ago, Slovenia, together with Austria and private donors, decided to support efforts aimed at addressing the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people and communities endangered by explosive hazards. In the light of the project's success, those activities will be extended for another two years, with a special focus on mine clearance and on reviving the agriculture sector, by helping farmers in contaminated areas to restore their livelihoods and food security.

I am mentioning this particular project because it showcases three important lessons learned that are relevant to our discussion. First, it reminds us of the

importance of developing strong partnerships among various stakeholders for ensuring the effectiveness of mine-action operations on the ground, particularly in such difficult environments. Secondly, it reconfirms the fact that humanitarian demining is crucial to the safety of civilians, the safe return of displaced people and long-term development. Thirdly, it demonstrates that mine-action activities should become an integrated part of broader development efforts. Such an approach is all the more important since it also contributes to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Before concluding, I would like to underline that we should not forget women and girls in our efforts. Let me therefore reaffirm my country's commitment to continued advocacy of the need for gender mainstreaming in mine action. Women and girls represent powerful agents of change, and we have to integrate their perspectives into our policies and strategies.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my country's continued commitment to the Ottawa Convention and the vision of a mine-free world by 2025. Reaching that goal would go a long way towards enabling post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development. Slovenia will therefore remain a reliable partner in that important quest.

**Annex 55****Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Mathu Joyini**

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important debate. Indeed, the dramatic, tragic effects that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had on the world and the loss of countless lives for more than a year have also had a deep impact on the work of the United Nations, including on our work in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

That should not, however, prevent us from continuing to promote the implementation and universalization of the commitments that we have undertaken with regard to the respective global and regional conventional arms-control instruments to which we adhere.

In that regard, South Africa continues support and advocate for the full implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its annexed protocols, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty.

South Africa has a particular and historical commitment to those instruments, with its late Ambassador Jackie Selebi chairing the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Mine Ban Treaty, in September 1997.

In keeping with the Security Council's central mandate of maintaining international peace and security, it is appropriate that we consider this item today, since its twin disarmament aspects of stockpile destruction and mine clearance are key to ensuring security and stability in mine-affected countries, not only in Africa but also around the world. That is also one of the building blocks in our quest for peace and security on our continent, which is a fundamental precondition for achieving our continental priorities as set out in Agenda 2063.

Beyond its disarmament objectives, the Mine Ban Treaty has a strong humanitarian pillar. Anti-personnel mines continue to kill, maim and threaten innocent civilians and to hamper so many of the poor people of the world in their quest to lead normal lives, which is an enormous humanitarian challenge.

South Africa has consistently emphasized the challenges of victim assistance and socioeconomic reintegration as being the greatest ones in our implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. It is the latter aspect in particular, namely, the reintegration of landmine survivors into society and giving them the opportunity of leading normal, economically active lives, that appears to have been neglected. Caring for victims should not be limited to the health aspects of post-traumatic care but should involve a broad understanding of the fact that we are all required to undertake efforts to assist landmine survivors, who need care for the remainder of their lives.

On the issue of international cooperation and assistance, South Africa wishes to emphasize that the full and effective implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons cannot be achieved without those States in a position to do so also fully meeting their international assistance undertakings and obligations.

We remain deeply concerned about the growing threats of harm to civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian and law enforcement personnel. In that regard, all parties to conflict are encouraged to continue to take appropriate measures to effectively mitigate those threats. In that context, South Africa stresses the importance of the

continued implementation of the first-ever stand-alone Security Council resolution on mine action — resolution 2365 (2017). We commend the efforts of peacekeeping missions to mitigate such threats, and it is imperative that peacekeeping operations and peacekeepers be equipped, informed and trained to reduce the threat of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

Furthermore, South Africa welcomes the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his inaugural report entitled “Comprehensive approach to mine action” (S/2018/623), which are geared towards preventing and resolving conflicts. In particular, South Africa concurs with the recommendations to mainstream mine action in appropriate country-specific conflict situations and to include mine action, if such action is required, in ceasefires and peace agreements. This is premised on the belief that such actions could enhance efforts to protect civilians and build trust and could serve as confidence-building measures among warring parties.

We also believe that a comprehensive approach should include strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in efforts to clear landmines, as appropriate.

In conclusion, through capacity-building and in other ways, South Africa continues to encourage the empowerment of women and their participation in the design and implementation of international peace and security mechanisms, including in disarmament and non-proliferation programmes, especially those relating to mine action.



**Annex 56****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, Agustín Santos Maraver**

[Original: Spanish]

Spain aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (annex 36) and wishes to make the following statement in its national capacity.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices represent a major humanitarian challenge. They pose a threat to affected communities not only during conflicts but also long after hostilities have ended. They pose a direct threat to the members of those communities and their livelihoods and exact a heavy toll on their prosperity as a result of a loss of cultivation areas and overburdened health-care services, which lead to forced population displacement and discourage investment, among other adverse effects. For all those reasons, areas in conflict or post-conflict situations with territories contaminated by the presence of these pernicious and indiscriminate weapons find it significantly more difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mitigating that threat and enabling affected communities to move towards the achievement of the SDGs require securing the strong support of the international community, while integrating demining efforts into humanitarian and development strategies and peacebuilding efforts and ensuring the coordinated participation of all relevant actors, such as United Nations demining entities, regional organizations, donor States and civil society.

Much has been achieved in this field. Thanks to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions many States have abandoned the production of these pernicious weapons, and tens of millions of stockpiled weapons have been destroyed. In addition, thousands more have been detected, removed and destroyed, thus securing large areas and reincorporating them into community economies. Millions of residents in contaminated areas have received explosive ordnance risk-awareness training.

Spain was among the first States to ratify the Conventions, destroy its stockpiles of explosive ordnance and adopt domestic legislation prohibiting their manufacture, stockpiling and use. It has also shown its commitment to humanitarian demining and, in lock-step with its development aid policies, has promoted various related activities around the world, including mine and explosive-remnants clearance, the training of demining experts — with more than 1,000 operators from 22 countries trained at the Spanish International Demining Centre — and the provision of assistance for the physical and psychological recovery of victims.

Aware of the road ahead, Spain reiterates its commitment to demining. It will continue to participate actively in the governing bodies of the Conventions as part of the Committee on Cooperative Compliance, a gender focal point of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and a member of the Victim Assistance Committee of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Furthermore, it will contribute at the national, multilateral and European levels to the objectives of the Oslo and Lausanne Action Plans. We are intensifying our efforts because that is what is required if we are to achieve our common goal — a world free of such weapons.

## Annex 57

**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Switzerland to the United Nations, Adrian Hauri**

[Original: English and French]

I thank the Vietnamese presidency for convening this open debate and thank the briefers for their contributions. Important successes have been achieved in mine action in recent years. Many formerly contaminated countries are now free of anti-personnel mines, cluster munition remnants and other explosive remnants of war. Large swathes of land were cleared, stockpiled devices were destroyed, victims received the assistance they required and lives were saved.

In that connection, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) plays an important coordination role on the ground. Yet, four years after the first Security Council resolution on mine action, challenges persist. The continued use of anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature, and cluster munitions has led to a disturbing increase in the number of casualties. Allow me to highlight four areas for improvement.

First, access to contaminated areas is key to carrying out mine action. Yet access for demining is increasingly under pressure in today's armed conflicts. That in turn hinders the delivery of humanitarian aid. Switzerland urges the Security Council to remind all parties to armed conflicts of their obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Secondly, to increase the impact of mine action, we encourage the adoption of an integrated approach combining clearance, mine-risk education and victim assistance. Switzerland actively supports mine-action projects in 11 locations — including Kosovo, Myanmar, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — in partnership with UNMAS and organizations such as the HALO Trust, the Danish Demining Group and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. We commend the Centre's collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Mine Action Center in order to improve the ability of affected States to manage risk in that regard. In order to develop an integrated approach, we call on the Security Council to include mine action in the mandates of relevant peacekeeping operations and special political missions, thereby enabling them to clear contaminated areas and raise awareness about the risks posed by these devices. The Security Council must also continue to recognize the importance of including mine action in ceasefire and peace agreements.

Thirdly, due to the increasing urbanization of conflicts, mine action actors must operate in collapsed infrastructure and address a wide range of explosive devices with varying levels of complexity. This requires an adaptation of standards and methodologies in order to guarantee safety during operations and remain technically relevant. For this reason, we supported the GICHD in developing the *Improvised Explosive Device Clearance Good Practice Guide*. We encourage those operating in such settings to use the guide to update their standards, processes and procedures and to continue carrying out their operations in line with the International Mine Action Standards. We also invite mine-affected States to show ownership and engage in mine action, in collaboration with the international community.

Finally, we call on all Member States to ratify the relevant international instruments, in particular the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and Amended Protocol II and Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and to ensure their full implementation. Their respect contributes to protecting civilians, generating access to housing and agricultural land, hence enabling sustainable development and peace.

Mines maim and kill indiscriminately during armed conflict, but also long after conflicts have ended. In 2020, Switzerland supported assistance for more than 15,000 victims, mine-risk education for 100,000 people and the return of 20 square kilometres of land to local populations, and assumed the presidency of the Cluster Munitions Convention. In line with our humanitarian tradition, we will continue to pursue the vision of a world without new victims.

**Annex 58****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh**

[Original: Arabic]

My delegation thanks you for organizing this meeting on mine action, which is important both for the maintenance of international peace and security and from a humanitarian perspective.

The terrorist war waged against the Syrian Arab Republic in recent years has had a major impact on all aspects of life for the Syrian people. The Syrian Government has managed to liberate large areas of the country from terrorist organizations, primarily the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and associated entities. Nevertheless, Syrian lives continue to be threatened on a daily basis by the remnants of terrorist organizations in certain areas. Those organizations seeded the vast areas that used to be under their control with various types of mines and improvised explosive devices. That has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians, including children of families returning to their regions and homes after being liberated from terrorism, as well as farmers tending their fields.

The Syrian Government has made the task of protecting its citizens from mines and explosive remnants a top priority. It has made great efforts to raise awareness of their dangers, remove them and assist victims. Syrian Arab Army teams, supported by Russian military forces operating on Syrian soil, have put in motion urgent plans to remove mines from numerous liberated areas. We are also grateful for the support in this area provided by the Armenian Government. However, these efforts are facing major challenges owing to the increase in mine-contaminated areas, a lack of technical equipment and the latest advanced vehicles, and insufficient financial resources, in addition to the negative impacts of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people.

On 4 July 2018, the Syrian Government signed a formal agreement with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to leverage its expertise and secure material and technical support for clearing areas contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance, as well as to conduct a risk-awareness programme. Syria has repeatedly met with Agnès Marcaillou and her team to discuss enhancing cooperation, and the Syrian Government has done everything it can to facilitate the work of UNMAS in Syria.

In addition, the Syrian Government, in cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNMAS, other international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other humanitarian partners, has focused major efforts in the following three areas.

It has organized campaigns to raise awareness among the population of the dangers of the remnants of unexploded ordnance, mines and booby traps. It has trained facilitators of both sexes and all ages and launched information campaigns that include leaflets, text messages, media advertisements, social media and highway billboards.

It has conducted probes and technical reconnaissance, followed up by demining activities in the field. Unfortunately, these activities have fallen short of desired levels due to the significant obstacles resulting from Western States linking any assistance to political conditions that are inconsistent with the humanitarian nature of demining work and withholding the financial and technical resources needed for a fully effective demining process. That constitutes an unacceptable politicization

that increases the number of victims and hinders the voluntary and safe return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes.

It provides health care and support for persons affected by mines, including those who have lost limbs or suffered physical disabilities or deformities. In that regard, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour — in its capacity as the national coordinator of the Syrian Government's efforts to ensure development inclusive of persons with disabilities — is coordinating the response to the needs of mine victims. The Ministry of Health does everything it can to provide those victims with health care. The Syrian Government has enacted a number of laws and measures to facilitate victims' access to suitable education, employment and health care. There are presently 12 centres affiliated with the Government and non-governmental organizations that provide prosthetic limbs and free medical care to victims across the Syrian governorates. However, as important as these efforts are, there is a significant shortage of supplies and medical equipment, including prosthetic limbs themselves.

In the light of the preceding, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its demand for the lifting of unilateral coercive measures, the provision of international support and financial and technical demining resources and the implementation of programmes of action agreed to by the Syrian Government and UNMAS. That includes the provision of capacity-building in good faith without politicization, conditionality or selectivity and in direct coordination with the national authorities.

## Annex 59

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations

Landmines continue to pose serious challenges to humankind. Hundreds of thousands lie hidden, waiting to be activated, unable to differentiate between the footstep of a combatant or that of a child.

As a country heavily affected by landmine contamination, Thailand is fully committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, also known as the Ottawa Convention. In line with the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament — “disarmament that saves lives” — Thailand has utilized a people-centred approach and an objective of leaving no one behind in our mine action. Over the past two decades, Thailand has completed more than 90 per cent of mine clearance work, with only 46.14 square kilometres remaining along the Thai-Cambodian border. Our two countries have concluded a memorandum of understanding on demining cooperation as part of the two countries' demining efforts in certain areas along the border. The project enabled both countries to release a substantial amount of contaminated land. Thailand is committed to realizing the goal of being landmine-free by 2025.

Thailand reaffirms that our work on disarmament and arms control is now more than ever critical in fostering socioeconomic progress. Therefore, Thailand places the utmost importance on victim assistance and mine risk education to ensure that our citizens have equal access to protection and assistance where needed. Although the coronavirus disease pandemic has imposed certain restrictions on providing victim assistance and ready-to-eat meals to affected communities, our personnel remain active and resilient in finding careful and creative ways to assist and deliver.

During Thailand's chairmanship of the Ottawa Convention's Committee on Victim Assistance in 2016, in collaboration with States parties, we developed guidance for victim assistance reporting, which has helped States parties fulfil their reporting obligations in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Thailand once again assumed the chairmanship of the Committee this year and has identified two key themes to guide our work. The first is to build a new, more inclusive narrative for the work of the Committee in order to allow for the participation of more parties. The second is to promote greater synergy between the Committee on Victim Assistance and various disarmament bodies, partner organizations and other international agencies. For instance, we are exploring the possibility of creating a common standard for victim assistance based on the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Thailand is of the firm view that global disarmament and non-proliferation challenges can be best addressed through multilateralism, with all the countries committed to their obligations and our collective resolve to keep our people safe. Within South-East Asia, the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Mine Action Center in 2012 was a milestone achievement. The Center continues to uphold ASEAN's strong commitment to regional mine action and enhanced cooperation with relevant institutions such as the United Nations Mine Action Service and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

In addition to action at the global level, Thailand has also sought local cooperation and participation, such as peer-to-peer assistance programmes, and we support the participation of local health volunteers. We continue to encourage

all countries to place high importance on empowering local actors and listening to their voices.

In that connection, Thailand stresses the necessity of utilizing a multi-stakeholder approach in our work, be it within civil society or in the private sector. Thailand continues to highlight the disproportionate impact of conventional weapons on women and children and urges all States to include gender and victim perspectives in their disarmament work. This inclusive and holistic approach has proven to be the best catalyst for advancing important mine action discussions and initiatives.

In that regard, Thailand supports transparency and confidence-building measures in order to ensure the global monitoring of conventional weapons. We call upon all States, particularly developed countries, to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance and cooperation for mine action, especially for mine clearance and the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims. At the same time, we call for an expansion of multilateral cooperation in all of its dimensions.

To that end, Thailand stands ready to collaborate with all partners to strengthen mine action and advance the multilateral disarmament machinery within the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

## Annex 60

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on Viet Nam's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We appreciate your initiative to highlight the multidimensional challenges and threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as well as the need for better cooperation and coordination to tackle those challenges at various levels.

Indeed, the threat to human lives and humanitarian efforts posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs remains a serious issue. Their impact is felt in about 60 countries —roughly one third of the Organization's membership. In addition to claiming lives, they injure, maim or otherwise affect the civilian population, undermine State security and hinder economic development. The stark reality is that landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs remain long after conflicts end. As a result, many generations have to live through the challenges they pose.

Mine action is crucial not only for the peace and security agenda but also for humanitarian efforts and sustainable development. However, national and international mine action efforts to clear contaminated areas and provide services for the victims face serious challenges. Effective mine action requires well-trained personnel and coordinated efforts in various fields, such as surveillance, mine-clearing and victim assistance. Adequate funding is an absolute necessity for these efforts. Least developed countries in particular are facing difficulties in mine clearance due to limited resources. Training prospective trainers for mine-clearance activities within their own countries would help them to become self-sufficient in achieving mine-action goals.

Concrete measures for better coordination and cooperation in mine-action support is needed at national, regional and international levels. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) plays an important role in tackling current challenges. By coordinating United Nations mine action, leading operational responses, supporting peace operations and developing standards, policies and norms, UNMAS works to eliminate the threat posed by mines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs. It is crucial to exchange views on challenges, lessons learned and best practices among mine-affected and donor countries, United Nations subsidiary bodies and other international organizations.

In that connection, we would like to underscore the importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention, as the cornerstone of international efforts to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel land mines.

As a country with long borders and conflict-stricken areas, we spare no effort to fulfil the goals of the Ottawa Convention and Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), to which Turkey is a party. We have eliminated our stocks and are working to clear the remaining landmines. All minefields in Turkey are mapped, recorded, marked, fenced and continuously monitored by military personnel in order to protect local populations and passers-by.

Turkey also attaches importance to ensuring the social and economic well-being of victims of mines and IEDs. In particular, targets and policies are being identified in areas that will increase participation in employment and social life.

Convinced of the importance of inter-agency cooperation with States and international organizations, we have developed partnerships with the United



Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. Since 2014, with funding from Turkey, the United Nations and the European Union, UNDP has been implementing a project entitled “The Eastern Borders Mine Clearance Project”. Turkey has also signed bilateral cooperation agreements, including with Azerbaijan and Cambodia.

In that connection, we would like to draw the attention of the international community to the dangerous situation created by Armenia, which laid landmines in the territories of Azerbaijan over its three decades of occupation and during its withdrawal following the signing by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation of the trilateral statement for the cessation of military activities on 10 November 2020. Dozens of Azerbaijani citizens, including civilians, have been killed or seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the post-conflict period. Armenia’s refusal to share information on minefields is a violation of international humanitarian law that jeopardizes regional peace and security.

Turkey has been contributing to the Implementation Support Unit’s budget and the Sponsorship Programme of the Ottawa Convention, as well as to the CCW Sponsorship Programme, in order to support implementation efforts. Turkey has also been donating to the Slovenia-based International Trust Fund Enhancing Human Security since 2014 in order to support mine victim assistance efforts around the world.

We have been supporting the resolutions entitled “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices” and “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction”, adopted annually by the General Assembly.

Turkey has been a target of heinous terrorist attacks, and its struggle to counter IEDs has been going on for several decades. We condemn such cowardly attacks in any part of the world. Unfortunately, the use of IEDs, particularly by illegal armed groups and terrorist organizations, has increased in recent years. The use of IEDs by such groups has indiscriminate effects and a devastating impact at all levels, especially on civilians.

We support the efforts towards the compilation of existing guidelines, best practices and other recommendations aimed at addressing the diversion or illicit use of such materials. In order to promote confidence-building, transparency, cooperation and assistance, regardless of membership status, we call on all Member States to submit their national reports to the related conventions and protocols. We are pleased to see that our efforts have been maturing towards a unified and well-coordinated mechanism for countering this global threat.

We think that a worldwide or regional network system for rapid information-exchange could strengthen our struggle against IED-based threats. That is why we have shared our experience on countering the IED threat in relevant forums. It is imperative that we react against all types of terrorist acts in solidarity and cooperation, without any discrimination. Turkey attaches great importance to awareness-raising among the civilian population, as well as all security personnel, in relation to the IED threat and supports international efforts to curb the illicit transfer, stockpiling, possession and use of those explosives.

In conclusion, Turkey shares the humanitarian aspirations to reach a world free of mines. We also emphasize our support for addressing the threat resulting from explosive remnants of war and IEDs. We believe that, through strong partnerships, further cooperation and coordination at various levels, we can achieve that goal, which is also important for sustainable development. In that regard, the universalization of instruments such as the Ottawa Convention remains a priority.

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**Annex 61****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations**

The delegation of Ukraine thanks the Vietnamese presidency for convening this open debate on the issue of mine action, which is an important element in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Regrettably, ongoing conflicts and military activities are resulting in the contamination of new territories by explosive ordnance. Moreover, improvised explosive devices are increasingly being used by illegal armed and terrorist groups, causing enormous human suffering.

Mine action remains an essential tool for enabling humanitarian response and the protection of civilians and a core precondition for stabilization and sustainable development. Ukraine pays tribute to all those involved in combating the threat posed by anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance around the world. In particular, we commend the relentless efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service and all relevant United Nations and other agencies involved in increasing security in conflict and post-conflict situations through the five pillars of mine action: clearance, risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction.

As a State party to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Ukraine acknowledges their fundamental role in minimizing the risks resulting from landmines and explosive remnants of war and welcomes the progress achieved to date by some countries towards fulfilling their respective international obligations.

As a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and hostile actions carried out by the Russia-guided illegal armed groups operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, our country continues today to deal with a drastically increased number of dangerous explosive devices, causing severe casualties among civilians, including children. Today Ukraine ranks fifth in the world in terms of the highest number of civilian casualties caused by mines.

Since the spring of 2014, approximately 16,000 square kilometres in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions have been contaminated by explosive devices. Anti-personnel landmines left in Ukrainian arms depots on the occupied territories, mainly in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, are being transferred by Russia to the terrorists fighting in the east of Ukraine. Two million Ukrainian men, women and children in the eastern parts of Ukraine face constant insecurity due to landmines and explosive remnants. Every day millions of people risk their lives to access markets, schools, hospitals and farmlands. Landmines have also significantly curtailed people's ability to move freely across the checkpoints where crossings occur each month.

Therefore, mine action remains a priority for Ukraine. The personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, as well as the Special Transportation Service of Ukraine, in close cooperation with international partners, are actively engaged in performing a range of practical measures on decontamination and destruction of explosive devices on the liberated territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including providing mine-risk education. Just since the beginning of 2021, mine action operators have cleared 453 hectares, checked 65 kilometres of roads and railways and discovered and destroyed 8,655 explosive items in the liberated areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

However, comprehensive humanitarian demining will be possible only after the end of hostilities. As a mine-affected State, Ukraine calls for the further consolidation of international efforts to strengthen mine action in order to better

assist States in overcoming the lasting consequences, as well as to intensify pressure on aggressor States to immediately end any indiscriminate use of explosive devices in violation of international law.

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**Annex 62****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations**

The United Arab Emirates commends Viet Nam for convening such an important meeting.

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have been killed or injured by landmines, unexploded ordnance or improvised explosive devices. Over the past decade, there have been more than 150,000 casualties from improvised explosive devices globally. Some 80 per cent of the victims of those devices are civilians.

Explosive remnants of war are an issue that is often overlooked. The threat persists long after conflicts have ended. It affects civilians, impedes the work of peacekeepers and hinders humanitarian aid. That creates additional knock-on effects, including damage to infrastructure, population displacement and loss of livelihoods. We reiterate the call in resolution 2365 (2017) for Member States to mitigate that danger. We would like to propose the following concrete measures to address the long-lasting threat that such devices pose.

First, partnership and cooperation are central to the success of mine action. That includes information-sharing, technical expertise and financial and material assistance. The United Arab Emirates has prioritized mine action in places such as Yemen, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Kosovo. We work in close cooperation with international partners, the host State and local communities. To that end, the United Arab Emirates has contributed \$50 million towards mine action in southern Lebanon and \$27.8 million in Afghanistan. In addition, the United Arab Emirates has partnered with the United Nations Mine Action Service in administering the Emirates mine clearance project in Afghanistan.

Secondly, innovative technologies should be used to safely and efficiently deal with the threat of mines. For example, where peacekeepers are deployed, we can harness technology to enhance their force-protection capabilities by improving mobility, situational awareness and reaction time.

Thirdly, we must also ensure that both peacekeepers and the civilian population are adequately trained, informed and equipped to reduce the threat posed by such explosives. In Yemen, for example, a field engineering team from the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces conducted awareness campaigns for the residents of Yemen's liberated areas about the dangers of mines and improvised explosive devices.

In conclusion, in line with the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, commemorated on 4 April, the United Arab Emirates would like to express its sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to demining. In what are often volatile and high-risk environments, they work to ensure the protection of the civilian population. The international community must work to continue mine action and address this critical challenge to sustaining peace and rebuilding war-torn communities.

**Annex 63****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Venezuela to the United Nations**

[Original: English and Spanish]

This being the first time that our delegation participates in the deliberations of the Security Council this month, allow us at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of this important body and to wish you every success in your work for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Likewise, while commending the convening of this meeting to discuss such an important matter as mine action and sustaining peace, we convey our appreciation to the briefers for their valuable presentations, as well as to your delegation for the concept note (S/2021/284, annex) circulated in advance to guide our discussions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela strongly condemns the use of anti-personnel mines, in contravention of international law, for the purpose of maiming, killing and terrorizing the innocent civilian population, especially the most vulnerable sectors of society, thus denying them access to farmland, which, in turn, leads to famine and forces them to flee their homes, turning them either into internally displaced persons or refugees and preventing them from returning safely to their places of original residence because of the dangers of transiting in such areas.

In that regard, while renewing our firm political commitment to the full implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Oslo Action Plan, we respectfully call on those that have yet done so to consider acceding to that important legal instrument without further delay, with a view to its universalization and as a concrete demonstration of the general agreement on the importance of mine action.

We also take this opportunity to commend the important work of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in providing impartial expertise and experience, including technical assistance and capacity-building, for mine clearance and destruction operations, as well as developing and implementing socioeconomic, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for mine victims.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is of the view that, as stated in the concept note for this open debate, mine action is critical to advancing the peace and security agenda, as well as humanitarian emergency response and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, while positively contributing to stabilization and sustaining peace.

Consequently, we recognize the significant progress that has been registered globally in the field of mine action. Venezuela, for its part, as guarantor of the safety and protection of its population and as a responsible member of the international community, has fully complied with its international obligations in that important field, including those arising from the 1997 Ottawa Convention, which resulted in our country being declared a territory free of anti-personnel mines in 2013.

However, we must also recognize that the threats and challenges posed by mines, remnants of war and improvised explosive devices persist, as well as the concerns over their humanitarian, social, economic, security and development implications and consequences for life in general, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In that regard, our country is deeply concerned by the presence and use of anti-personnel mines in various parts of the world, including our Latin American region,

in particular in the Republic of Colombia, according to data from the International Committee of the Red Cross. In fact, in recent days, in an unprecedented situation in our country's history, Colombian armed groups attempted to emplace that kind of explosive ordnance in our national territory, as recently denounced before the Security Council through a letter transmitted on 5 April 2021 (see S/2021/330, annex), and the reason that we have recently requested the technical advice of UNMAS.

We must stress that, despite the attempts of the Colombian Government to involve our country in its long internal conflict and to export its consequences to Venezuela, the Venezuelan authorities, which maintain full, effective control of the territory, have been carrying out the necessary activities to defend the country's national sovereignty, safeguard its territorial integrity and ensure the well-being of its population. In that context, we denounce not only the lack of will from the Colombian State to implement an effective policy of binational cooperation to act against the armed groups in the border area, but also the newest campaign of aggression against our country, emanating from the latest developments on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, which is intended to be exploited by actors interested in escalating a regional conflict.

In conclusion, while renewing our country's unwavering commitment to the achievement of a world free of anti-personnel mines, in line with the provisions of our national legislation and with our international commitments, and while stressing that wars have limits and that civilians must be respected and kept out of hostilities, we request that the Security Council urgently call on all international actors to effectively fulfil their obligations and to strengthen and enhance regional and international cooperation in mine action, and that, in order to preserve the Latin American and Caribbean region as a zone of peace, it resolve without further delay to investigate the activities of Colombian armed groups that, from the territory of that country, carry out armed attacks against the Venezuelan territory and population, including through the emplacement of anti-personnel mines.

**Annex 64****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations, Abdullah Al-Saadi**

Allow me to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on such an important topic. Indeed, mines pose a serious danger and have long-term consequences for societies, especially in areas of conflict, where many innocent civilians, including children and women, fall victim to those internationally prohibited weapons, in particular anti-personal mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, which has been ratified by the Republic of Yemen, prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Yet such weapons are still being widely used in many conflict areas, especially by insurrections, coup militias and armed non-State actors.

Besides their grave danger to civilians during and even long after the conflict, landmines undermine efforts by humanitarian actors by limiting the number of safe corridors for food, leaving civilians in critical conditions and facing high possibilities of widespread famine.

In Yemen, since the Houthis' coup in 2014, the militia has planted more than 1 million mines in all the territories they reached during their expansion. This includes in and around key cities and on key transportation routes between them. International reports have proven that the Houthis not only use the weapons and mines provided by Iran, but also that they are domestically manufacturing mines and IEDs.

Despite their prohibition, the Houthis use mines with no strategic military purposes, but rather in an indiscriminate pattern, targeting more civilian populations, especially women and children, in a deliberate and systematic killing of innocents. Even if injured civilians are fortunate enough to survive the explosions, they are not fortunate enough to have access to health facilities. Normally, they have no other choice but to amputate damaged limbs.

The Government of Yemen has established a national mine action committee as a step in implementing the mine action response plan. The committee is the official body formulating relevant policy, allocating resources and developing the national mine response strategy. Yemen has therefore established a set of mine action projects covering many areas of importance, including social and economic impacts, mine risk education and psychological impacts.

The Government is also working with the Arab coalition and partners on removing mines planted by the Houthis in large areas of Yemen and the Red Sea. Since 2015, the Government has removed over 228,315 landmines, IEDs and sea mines planted by these militias. However, the Houthis continued planting of prohibited mines undermines all efforts with regard to mine action in Yemen, resulting in the killing and injuring of many civilians, including women and children. Unfortunately, Yemen will continue to suffer from this hidden catastrophe for decades to come. The planting rate is higher than the demining one, and the number of civilian victims is unfortunately increasing, and it might even spike once internally displaced persons start returning to their homes. International action is therefore urgently needed in Yemen, first by pressuring the Houthis to end the use of mines and, secondly, by supporting the Government's demining efforts.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the Government of Yemen's adherence to its obligations under international conventions and relevant Security Council

resolutions on this issue, including resolution 2365 (2017), as well as its commitment to strengthening the global partnership for better delivery on mine action.

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