

## **MINUTES**

### **MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP**

**TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016**

#### **ITALIAN PERMANENT MISSION TO UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

##### **1. WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR**

The Chair of the MASG, Ambassador Inigo Lambertini, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, opened the meeting at 10.15 hours and welcomed the MASG members to the meeting. He also extended a warm welcome to Ms Agnès Marcaillou, the Director of UNMAS and to all MASG observer organizations.

The Chair then made a series of opening remarks. The first was to remind the meeting that Italy had taken over as Chair of the MASG at the start of 2016 and had hosted their first MASG meeting in Geneva in February. This had been an interesting meeting and he hoped that MASG meetings would remain useful and relevant to members and observers. The minutes of the Geneva meeting had been circulated to members on 18 March 2016 and also posted on the MASG website. The Chair also thanked the United States for their ongoing funding of the MASG secretariat position, which he said helps to maintain continuity and consistency within the MASG.

In preparation for assuming the Chair of the MASG, Italy had drafted a short paper outlining their plans for the MASG for the next two years and this had been shared at the Geneva meeting. As there had been no objection to the plan, Ambassador Lambertini said that Italy would continue along these lines. They were to:

- Continue facilitating the exchange of information about mine action amongst MASG members and to make MASG meetings as interactive as possible;
- Maintain the focus of the MASG on support to the United Nations, but also on supporting mine affected countries and other organizations, as appropriate;
- Encourage effective coordination and partnerships among donors, agencies and mine action operators;
- Support efforts aimed at the completion of the various Convention obligations;
- Use the MASG as a venue to discuss new ideas or trends in mine action.

Next, Ambassador Lambertini said that he would like to say a few words about his own country, Italy, and its recent support to mine action. In 2015, Italian funds to mine action totalled EUR 3.5 million, which was higher than the average for the past 10 years and are steadily increasing. The geographical priorities were in line with previous years, including support for Afghanistan, Bosnia, Colombia, Gaza, Syria, Somalia and Sudan.

The Chair then outlined the agenda for today's meeting, noting that a couple of the interventions were time dependent. A copy of the agenda and the list of attendees are attached to these minutes.

## **2. COUNTRY AND THEMATIC UPDATES**

**2.1 Iraq.** The first presentation was an update on the situation in Iraq, provided by Ms Lise Grande, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and also the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. Ms Grande spoke via video link from Baghdad. Ms Grande emphasized that mine action is a fundamental enabler for other humanitarian activity in Iraq and that without the mine action actors, under the coordination of UNMAS, the work of other multi-lateral agencies would not be possible. She also noted that as coordinator, UNMAS set the normative standards, undertook threat assessments, provided risk education (RE) and clearance activities and liaised with government agencies. UNMAS was also a key actor on the ground in terms of resource mobilization, contracting operators and tracking and monitoring progress. Ms Grande gave the example of Ramadi, where humanitarian activities had been delayed for six months until proper coordination of the mine action operators had commenced.

Ms Grande then said that up to 10 million people in Iraq were in need of humanitarian assistance and that this may rise to 12 million. When areas are stabilized, the UN can provide assistance, but noted again that mine action was a precursor activity. She also stressed that improvised explosive devices (IED's) and booby traps were expected to be a major threat to the 1.2 million civilians in Mosul, should the area be liberated from Daesh. The financial resources required for mine action in Iraq were estimated to be US\$200 million, of which there was a shortfall of about US\$100 million. Finally Ms Grande said that the UN applied a 'blended approach' in Iraq where UNMAS and an array of mine clearance operators worked together towards common aims. In conclusion, she also thanked the United States and other donors for their support.

During Q&A, the US representative noted that other donors like Germany and Canada were active in Iraq and thanked Ms Grande for her leadership. In response, Ms Grande noted that there were 66 countries involved in Iraq, and that five coordination groups had been established. The Stability Group had a sub-group to deal with mine action, chaired by the EU. Ms Marcaillou noted that the UN cannot 'go it alone' in Iraq, and that the mine action coordination arrangements and lessons learned in Iraq were a blueprint for other countries. She acknowledged the current donors to UNMAS Iraq and also noted that UNMAS had developed good civil-military relationships that did not compromise humanitarian principles. To conclude the session, Ambassador Lambertini noted the work that Italy and an Italian company (with Filipino workers) were doing on the Mosul Dam, close to Daesh held territory. In closing the agenda item, Ambassador Lambertini thanked Ms Grande for joining the meeting and for her valuable update.

**2.2 Afghanistan/ACAP III.** Mr Nitin Madhav, the Deputy Director for Afghan Affairs at USAID provided an update on the third phase of the 'Afghan Civilian Assistance Program' or ACAP III. The briefing was in the context of US\$30 million that USAID had provided for victim assistance activities through UNMAS.

Mr Madhav noted that USAID became involved with Afghanistan in 2001 (following the US-led intervention). Their programme, which started at US\$38 million per year, was now running at US\$767 million for 2016. Through the efforts of Senator Patrick Leahy, many activities were focussed on supporting civilian victims injured as a result of the conflict. Mr Madhav said that different responses were applied in different parts of the country. Assistance was provided to all

victims, provided that they were not active Taliban members or supporters. USAID delivered a broad range of services including medical support, prosthetic amputee rehabilitation, vocational training, psycho-social support and advocacy. USAID was working with different Afghan government ministries like Martyrs, Agriculture and Health to ensure that the Afghan government can take care of its own people in the future. Mr Madhav noted that many lessons had been learned over the years, particularly with regards to fraud prevention.

In question time the Chair and the representative of Switzerland asked 'where are we now' with regards to mine action assistance to Afghanistan? Mr Madhav reiterated that USAID does not typically fund mine clearance work and that this is done through the US State Department. He noted that there had been many successes, like the work USAID had done with the organization Roots of Peace, which was helping restore the agriculture sector in former minefields. However, renewed fighting often caused delays and setbacks and although it sounded simplistic, he said that stopping the fighting was the key to success. The US State Department representative noted that the Afghan mine clearance programme was the oldest programme in the world and that the US was supporting the process of transitioning the programme to national ownership and strengthening national level coordination. The US was also funding the clearance of military training areas and firing ranges.

Ms Marcaillou agreed that the Afghan government needed to take ownership and to decide its own priorities, and that the transition plan developed by UNMAS in 2012 is being implemented. She also noted that despite the difficulties, good monitoring and evaluation and also transparency with donors was important. The representative of Austria asked about identifying 'Taliban' supporters and Mr Madhav said that they applied a triangulation method to verify victims claims with local government officials, other civilians (like neighbours) and the victims themselves. The representative of Canada made a more general comment that next year would be the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) coming into force. He noted that Afghanistan was a major issue then and despite an amazing amount of international assistance the country was still an issue today. The whole landmine and ERW issue could not be dealt with by only one country or organization.

The Director of the GICHD mentioned that in the context of APMBC deadlines, many countries still needed assistance to strengthen their capacity in terms of legislation, strategic planning, standards, land release, information management etc. He noted that the new Afghan mine action strategic plan 2016-21, developed with the support of the Centre, was a good example. Ms Marcaillou emphasized that a country requesting an extension was a serious issue and that a solid plan had been developed for Afghanistan. However, due to lack of funding this was now 'derailed' and Afghanistan was unlikely to meet its 2023 deadline and the top level of the Afghan government needed to realize this. In closing the session the Chair agreed that national ownership was a key factor. He thanked Mr Madhav for his briefing.

**2.3 Syria.** Ms Marcaillou gave a presentation on the current situation in Syria. She mentioned that the use of indiscriminate weapons had resulted in five million people living in ERW affected areas and that the presence of explosive hazards was rated as the number two concern of the population. The impact of the ERW included forced displacement of people, impeded humanitarian efforts and hindered stabilization efforts. UNMAS is fully integrated into the 'Whole of Syria' UN response and coordinates the Mine Action sub-cluster. One example given was that at the request of WFP, roads

had been cleared to allow truck convoys to get through to affected areas. UNMAS had opened a coordination office in Gazientep in cooperation with OCHA, and may soon be opening an office in Damascus. Activities undertaken by the UN agencies included MRE, clearance (in accessible areas), victim assistance and data collection. Ms. Marcaillou thanked OCHA, Denmark, Italy and Japan for contributing to the work of UNMAS. Finally, Ms Marcaillou noted that the challenges in Syria were access, security, sensitivity, collecting data and fundraising.

**2.4 Ukraine.** Ms Judy Grayson of UNICEF briefed the meeting on the situation in Ukraine. UNICEF had been undertaking MRE, victim assistance (VA) and advocacy activities in Ukraine since the start of conflict in 2015. In February 2016 a joint UN mission consisting of UNICEF, UNMAS and UNDP had gone to Ukraine and travelled to both Government and non-Government controlled areas. The key findings of the mission had been briefed at a workshop on 18 July involving all actors and they were;

- The humanitarian impact of ERW is high, with 2 to 5 accidents each week and the ERW contamination covers a huge area.
- ERW clearance capacities exist in Ukraine, but they need to be re-oriented away from their current activities of responding to call-outs for WW II bombs. They now need to undertake activities like surveys and information management.
- The understanding of humanitarian mine action needs to be addressed at all levels of government. At present the focus is only on military mine clearance but it needs to be extended to MRE, surveys, victim assistance and information management.
- Any full scale mine action response will first rely on a political resolution of the conflict, but MRE and improving the understanding of mine action as humanitarian activity can proceed.

Ms Grayson noted that some progress had been made since the mission and that the government had taken steps to establish a national mine action programme. One international NGO had been authorized to undertake clearance work in Government controlled areas, and other NGOs were undertaking survey and data collection activities.

The Chair stressed that mine action is not only a problem in the developing world, but also in European countries like Bosnia and Ukraine. The Director of the GICHD said that they were working with the OSCE on issues like mine action legislation, standards and information management in Ukraine. He noted that mine action could be used as a confidence building measure in Ukraine, like it had in Colombia. The Swiss representative asked about Ukraine's non-compliance with its APMBC obligations and also about coordination. Ms Grayson said that the APMBC was a very politically sensitive topic and that the issue of the clearance deadline had been raised, but not allegations of new mine use. With regards to the coordination of mine action it was up to the Ukrainian government to decide the best method.

**2.5 Lao PDR.** Ms Oksana Leshchenko of UNDP gave an update on mine action in the Lao PDR. She reminded the meeting that Laos was heavily contaminated with unexploded ordnance (UXO) and cluster munition remnants, and that UNDP had been supporting mine action in Laos since 1996. A positive development was that at the recent ASEAN summit held in Vientiane, the Lao government had launched an additional SDG #18 dealing with UXO. This was an excellent demonstration of the commitment of the government to deal with the problem. UNDP has recently launched a new five year strategy to assist Laos during the period 2017 – 2021. One of the major activities will be to

undertake a comprehensive nation-wide non-technical survey throughout Laos. The data from the survey will help strengthen the link between mine action and development, and also move from a 'request based' priority system to an 'evidence based' system. UNDP will also help improve monitoring and evaluation efforts to better measure gender and poverty outcomes. At the national level UNDP co-chairs the UXO Sector Working Group along with the USA, as part of the 'Round Table Process' for national level development coordination. UNDP manage a UXO Trust Fund and donor support has been provided by Japan, New Zealand and the USA, among others.

The representative of Japan noted that Laos is one of the priority countries for Japan and they have promoted a system of triangular cooperation between Laos, Cambodia and Japan. In August this year Japan launched the first ever mechanical UXO clearance project in Xieng Khouang province, through the Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS).

Ms Leshchenko concluded by noting that at the global level a 'Framework' forms the basis for UNDPs Mine Action for Sustainable Development Global Project and is the vehicle for UNDP to implement its strategic vision. UNDP will be presenting the Global Project in more detail as one of the agenda items at a meeting to be held on 25 October 2016, hosted by the Swiss Mission in New York.

### **3. KEYNOTE ADDRESS – MR HERVE LADSOUS, USG DPKO (full statement available online)**

The Chair welcomed the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr Hervé Ladsous and invited him to address the meeting. Mr Ladsous started by thanking all MASG members for their support to mine action. He also thanked Italy for chairing the MASG meeting and for their ongoing political and financial support to mine action.

Mr Ladsous noted that as conflicts rage across the world, and the threats posed by explosive hazards perpetuate humanitarian crises and hinder emergency response, mine action is needed more than ever. Thanks to the lead role of UNMAS, United Nations entities deliver a coordinated and effective response to the challenges related to explosive remnants of war, mines, IEDs and other explosive ordnance posing a threat to civilians all over the world.

Mr Ladsous then gave a number of examples of the United Nations work in mine action. In Syria, mine action protects the lives of displaced people as they seek safe havens from violence. In Iraq, where improvised explosive devices are placed under bridges and along roadsides, mine action allows humanitarian convoys to reach their final destination and deliver their life-saving aid to populations desperately in need. In Gaza, even as it grabs fewer headlines these days, internally displaced people are still attempting to return to their homes where unexploded bombs lie hidden in the rubble. Mine action allows them to rebuild their homes safely. Mine action, in short, is indeed humanitarian action, driven by needs and centred on people. In South Sudan, mine action enables the Protection of Civilians as per the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission. For example, the expansion of UNMISS PoC sites required the clearance of explosive hazards in nineteen locations. In the aftermath of the July conflict, UNMAS was a critical first responder. Through rapid intervention by UNMAS, explosive hazards were removed from key UN locations including the apron of the Juba airstrip, WFP and other agency compounds; UNMISS bases, PoC sites, schools and residential civilian areas.

The United Nations is mandated to deliver an efficient and effective mine action response. For this, both leadership and coordination are vital. Last December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on assistance in mine action (A/70/80) which recognized UNMAS as the coordinator of mine action within the United Nations system. In this capacity, enhanced by its partnership with organizations such as the African Union and NATO, UNMAS draws on its unique position on the frontlines of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria to lead the mine action sector's coordination of international, national and civil society responses. Most recently, UNMAS efforts have further strengthened the mine action response to the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, as called upon by the General Assembly in resolutions A/70/80 and "Countering the threat posed by IEDs" (A/70/46).

The next step for UNMAS is to use the platform of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on mine action to map the United Nations work on IED threat mitigation. UNMAS is also in the process of initiating consultations on the elaboration of benchmarks and standards necessary for the sector to evaluate experts, training, equipment and the overall response to the threat of IEDs. This increase in requests for UNMAS to advise on and provide support to IED- related activities requires dedicated in-house resources from Member States.

In closing, Mr Ladsous again thanked the MASG members for their continued support to this important field of work. Mine action has become an indispensable bridge between peace and security, between humanitarian response and stabilization, which is necessary for long-term development. It is clear that achievement of almost all of the Sustainable Development Goals in countries affected by landmines and other explosive hazards must be underpinned by successful mine action responses.

Mr Ladsous then took a number of questions. The Chair asked about Mosul and Mr Ladsous noted that this was not a DPKO responsibility and that it was unclear how the situation in Mosul would unfold. However, ERW clearance in Ramadi was difficult and Mosul was a much bigger city, so a massive humanitarian problem was looming. The Swiss representative asked about plans for Syria and again Mr Ladsous said that a political solution was needed first and that it was not a DPKO responsibility yet. Both sides had asked DPKO to re-open its base on the Golan Heights but the UN needed to proceed carefully, even with a presence on the margins of Syria. Ms Marcaillou also mentioned some activities undertaken to train and equip some Syrian search and rescue teams, as well as building up a network of local partners and undertaking data collection in Syria. The Chair then asked about Ukraine and Mr Ladsous replied that Ukraine was a delicate situation for the UN system, as it was a sensitive issue for some member States. He agreed that there certainly was a problem with ERW and that he was in regular contact with the Secretary General of the OSCE about the situation. In conclusion, he said that the UN was always looking to cooperate with regional security organizations and encouraged activities where mine affected countries were able to help each other out.

The Chair thanked Mr Ladsous for addressing the meeting and taking questions. The meeting was then shown a short video of an UNMAS bomb disposal task in Gaza.

#### **4. UPDATE FROM MEMBER STATES**

**4.1 Australia.** The representative of Australia said that Australia remains committed to mine action and to supporting all the relevant international conventions. Australia provides funding both bi-laterally and through multi-lateral agencies. This year Australia had provided AUD\$5 million to Iraq (through UNMAS) and also funding to Afghanistan and Colombia. Australia maintains a long term commitment to the Clearing for Results Programme in Cambodia, and has allocated AUD\$9 million during the period 2015 to 2020. Australia was currently providing EOD support to the Solomon Islands through Operation Render Safe. Australia remains active in all the relevant international conventions and is currently the coordinator for Cooperation and Assistance within the CCM. Finally, in cooperation with Austria, Chile and Iraq, and with assistance from Handicap International, Australia is developing guidance for countries to implement an integrated approach to victim assistance.

**4.2 United States.** The US representative said that mine action was a very important activity for the US in Iraq and Syria. In Syria they are looking at the initial possibilities for MRE and marking (prior to any clearance activities) but that security issues remain a concern. Colombia remains a priority for the US and despite the recent referendum result in Colombia, the US is continuing to fund projects, particularly in FARC controlled areas. The funding went to a wide range of partners. Full details of the US involvement in mine action are contained in their annual report titled 'To Walk the Earth in Safety'.

**4.3 European Union.** The EU representative re-stated the strong support of the EU for mine action. In 2015 EU institutions committed EUR 30 million to mine action activities, such as mine clearance, victim assistance, risk education and other activities in a wide range of countries, including Libya, Laos, Lebanon, Ukraine, Colombia, Iraq, the Philippines, CAR and Syria.

**4.4 The Netherlands.** The Netherlands remain a strong advocate for a mine-free world and have been a strong supporter of mine action for many years. This September the Netherlands committed to support mine action through a EUR 45 million multi-annual 'Mine Action and Cluster Munitions Programme 2016-2020.' Through this programme the Netherlands supports three partners: Mines Advisory Group, the Halo Trust and Danish Church Aid. These partners work in: Afghanistan, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, South-Sudan, Syria, West Bank, Somalia, Kosovo, Ukraine and Mali on clearance, mine risk education, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and capacity building activities.

**4.5 Germany.** The representative of Germany said that in addition to their bi-lateral funding for mine action, they now also provide funding through UNMAS for projects in Iraq, Western Sahara and Colombia. The German government has already committed EUR 15 million for 2016 and will focus for the rest of the year on Syria, Libya and the Ukraine. In Ukraine they actively support UNICEF and some NGO partners. He was confident that Germany would maintain the same level of funding next year, and that cross cutting issues were important to Germany in order to improve capacities with regard to monitoring, data collection etc.

**4.6 Canada.** The Canadian representative took the opportunity to underline Canada's support for the work of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG) as a mechanism for coordination and information exchange between donors on mine action. He noted that next year would be the 20<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the entry into force of the APMBC. Since that time Canada had provided over CAD\$237 million to mine action, including CAD\$13.7 million in 2015-16. Canada has a multi-year project in Afghanistan with the UN Mine Action Service and will stay the course, given the importance of addressing the scourge of landmines in that country. More recently, Canada announced CAD\$13.8 million for demining in Colombia, which included an announcement of new funding in the order of CAD\$1.3 million to the Organization of American States for logistical support for demining action in Colombia and CAD\$12.5 million for a project with the HALO Trust. Finally, Canada is currently looking at ways it can contribute to mine action and welcomes new mine action project proposals for our international development activities, peace and stabilization operations and humanitarian assistance programs, which will be reviewed against each program's mandate, geographic priorities and ongoing programming strategies.

**4.7 Switzerland.** The Swiss representative said that Switzerland had recently launched its new national 'Mine Action Strategy 2016-2019' and that it focussed on enhancing security, sustainable development and strengthening local capacity. Swiss funding will remain at around CHF16 to 18 million per year. In their role as co-chair of the APMBC Coordinating Committee for International Assistance, Switzerland was looking for a better understanding of the challenges and needs of affected countries to meet the 2025 deadline for a mine free world. A first presentation of an individual country approach would be undertaken at the 15th MSP in Chile later this year, and he requested the support of the donors, the UN and operators for this new approach.

**4.8 Japan.** The total amount of Japanese assistance provided in 2015 amounted to USD\$49.2 million for 39 projects in 20 countries and areas. The top recipients were Cambodia, Lao PDR, Afghanistan, DRC and Somalia. Japan provides support bilaterally to individual countries or through multi-lateral organizations. Japan has been the largest contributor to the UN VTF and this year USD\$16.4 million has been provided through the VTF for projects in Syria, Iraq, DRC, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Palestine. As noted earlier Lao PDR remains a priority for Japan.

**4.9 Austria.** Austria remains fully committed to mine action and the Ottawa Treaty, as underlined by their chairmanship of the 2017 Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC. Austria is engaged, together with Australia, Iraq and Chile in the elaboration of guidance for an integrated approach to victim assistance. Over the last few years, Austria has supported mine action (clearance, victim assistance, risk education) in Afghanistan, Albania, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Libya with an overall amount of approximately USD\$1 million. Most recently (2015/16), Austria supported Iraq with the provision of personal protection and detection equipment for deminers, as well as EUR 500,000 for the physical rehabilitation of victims.

**4.10 Estonia.** The representative of Estonia thanked Italy for convening the meeting and noted with thanks that Ukraine was included on the agenda. She also thanked UNICEF for the presentation about Ukraine. Estonia provides ongoing support for mine action and demining activities. Estonia will continue its contribution to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. Estonia has previously supported mine action in Mali, Gaza, Libya and Afghanistan, and will soon decide the next round of contributions. Estonia does not have a specific demining strategy, but demining is a priority area in the new Government's strategy for Estonia's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance (2016-2020).



## **5. UPDATE FROM OBSERVERS**

**5.1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).** The Director of the GICHD said that the Centre had recently undertaken missions to the Middle East region that focused on cross-border support activities into Syria from neighbouring countries and evolving activities in Central and Northern Iraq. A number of challenges were identified in both Syria and Iraq, including; the need to standardize information management, the need to provide capacity development to local and national authorities in Iraq, the need to address shortfalls in current mine action standards concerning IED threat in both Syria and Iraq, and the need for innovative solutions to mine action in conflict settings, with particular focus on mobile technologies and remote training capabilities. The GICHD has started to deliver activities to address these challenges with partners, including national and local authorities, UNMAS, and NGOs. As an example, last month, the Centre conducted a workshop in Gaziantep on information management, bringing together mine action partners working in Syria. This workshop aimed at agreeing on common data flows and data formats, which is vital to the planning and management of operations.

Regarding IEDs, the GICHD is currently conducting an assessment of how mine action actors are addressing this challenging issue. The operating environment in which IED Disposal (IEDD) takes place is complex and fast-evolving: a constant change in IED design and tactics, contexts ranging from the relatively safe to the highly insecure, and operators often working under pressing humanitarian needs. This has an impact on staff, equipment, and processes. Still, key managerial and operational dimensions characterizing mine action (such as information management, survey and clearance, and quality management) should be applied to IEDD operations as well, possibly even more strictly, given the particularly unforgiving nature of the environment in which they are conducted.

Preliminary findings of the assessment also point to the need for guidance on the selection of personnel offering existing IEDD experience and qualifications, and on the development of competency requirements for different levels of IEDD (similarly to what exist for EOD in mine action). Many aspects of existing IMAS are applicable to IEDD. A new IMAS for IEDD could highlight applicable aspects of existing IMAS and address relevant aspects unique to IEDD, whereas technical notes for mine action and SOPs should address the technical detail of carrying out IEDD. These questions will be discussed during an IMAS meeting later this month.

**5.2 International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF).** The Director of the ITF noted that the ITF was established 18 years ago and that Bosnia has been an important focus of their work since that time. He stressed that Bosnia was still an issue and that they need to finish the work that should have been completed long ago. The ITF maintains a focus on the South East Europe region including countries like Croatia, Serbia and Albania.

However the ITF shares its experience in other regions and with activities that enhance human security beyond mine action. For example, the ITF has opened an office in Ukraine. In addition to the good relations with the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the ITF is also willing to cooperate with other national and international institutions in the country. With the proposal for capacity building programs supporting the establishment of national structures, ITF would be glad to receive additional financial support for programs and will do its best to start expanding its work in Ukraine next year. Slovenia is also expecting the visit of president Porošenko in Ljubljana in November.

Following the completion of successful projects in Colombia in 2008-09, the ITF recently signed a MoU with Colombia. The ITF is now ready to start implementing capacity building programmes and counts on the support from partners in the Global Initiative for Demining in Colombia, as well as the EU Trust Fund for Colombia and other countries that have interest in helping Colombia bilaterally.

**5.3 James Madison University/Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery.** Ms Nicole Neitzey from JMU/CISR told the meeting that this was the 20<sup>th</sup> year of JMU's involvement with mine action and that 2017 would be the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction](#) (formerly the Journal of Mine Action), produced with funding from the US Departments of State and Defence. She noted that the next issue of the Journal would focus on the issue of IEDs – a topic that had been raised a number of times at today's meeting and she welcomed articles to be submitted on this topic. CISR also continues to produce the peer-reviewed section on Research and Development of new technologies for CWD. CISR also produced the annual publication 'To Walk the Earth in Safety' on behalf of the US State Department.

CISR continued to run management training for national mine action officials. They held their 10<sup>th</sup> course at JMU this summer and also conducted a regional training course in Vietnam. To date they have trained over 350 managers from mine action programmes from 48 countries. The next course to be held will be another regional one – this time in Croatia. Applications for this course close at the end of October. For more information, see <http://www.jmu.edu/cisr/programs/training.shtml>. The CISR team have also been doing technical work with JMU developing hands-on mobile GIS solutions and have trialled some applications in Vietnam.

Finally, Ms Neitzey mentioned that 2017 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the visit of Princess Diana to Bosnia – a visit that was arranged and hosted by the current Director of CISR, Dr Ken Rutherford. CISR are hoping to bring renewed attention to the ongoing issues of ERW contamination and victim assistance in Bosnia, as well as convene donors, governmental agencies, and NGOs working on these issues in the region in light of the changing scope of mine action. They are looking at ways to mark this occasion and seeking support for it, and so would be interested to hear ideas from anyone who may have suggestions.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**6.1 Next Meeting.** The Chair suggested that, as in previous years, the MASG would meet in Geneva on the margins of the annual Meeting of National Mine Action Directors and United Nations Advisers. UNMAS is close to finalizing the dates for this meeting and will inform the MASG Secretariat when these dates are confirmed (most likely in early February 2017).

**6.2 Director UNMAS Closing Comments.** The Director of UNMAS made some closing remarks, including thanking the Italian Chair for hosting such an engaging meeting. She then noted that although the subject of several presentations and statements had highlighted UNMAS programmatic achievements in the field, there is a need for increased levels of core funding to support UNMAS operation and backstopping of a growing number of programmes. Ms Marcaillou then emphasized UNMAS work in IED Threat Mitigation by introducing the new 'IED Lexicon' which was produced to provide the United Nations system with a coherent conceptual framework and operational

vocabulary to address the IED threat worldwide. Ms Marcaillou responded to an earlier comment about UNMAS coordination of UN agencies and she noted that the annual Portfolio of Mine Action Projects was one tool that helped define legitimate needs and priorities. The Director also announced that a Mine Action Technology Workshop would be held in Lyon, France from 15 – 17 November 2016. This was a joint UNMAS-GICHD activity which will focus on technology aspects of mine action. She also informed those in attendance that a side event would be held to discuss lessons learned on IED threat mitigation in Iraq. Finally, Ms Marcaillou said that UNMAS will continue the work on IEDD standards at a special IMAS Sub-Committee Meeting to be held in New York from 17-18 October. UNMAS will draw on all expertise available, including Member States, for this activity.

## **7. MEETING CLOSE**

The Chair closed the meeting at 13.15 hours.

Final