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General and complete disarmament

Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/64](#), entitled “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”, contains a discussion of the efforts and initiatives carried out within and outside the United Nations system to address related challenges.

* [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 77/64, entitled “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-ninth session on the implementation of that resolution, acknowledging and taking into account existing efforts, both inside and outside the United Nations, and seeking the views of Member States. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. Views received from Member States are posted to the web page of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.¹

2. The present report contains an overview of significant trends and developments since the previous report (A/75/175) was issued in 2020. It addresses efforts of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), related to countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

II. Significant trends and developments

Humanitarian impact of improvised explosive devices

3. Improvised explosive devices are a direct threat to civilians, humanitarian actors and security forces around the world. Since the previous report, such devices have continued to kill and maim civilians; inhibit safe movement, access to services and delivery of humanitarian assistance; endanger United Nations mission personnel, threatening effective mandate delivery; hinder economic activity; and hamper the rehabilitation of public infrastructure.

4. In July 2023, the Secretary-General issued a policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace following extensive consultations with States, international and regional organizations and civil society. In the New Agenda for Peace, he called upon States to take action to reduce the human cost of weapons, including through measures to stop the use by terrorist and other non-State armed groups of improvised explosive devices. The Secretary-General also called upon States to implement the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, adopted in 2022, and to establish mechanisms to mitigate and investigate harm to civilians and ensure accountability of perpetrators. The Political Declaration is aimed at strengthening compliance with and improving the implementation of international humanitarian law. It contains several commitments by States and practical measures, including the commitment to implement, review, develop or improve national policy and practice with regard to the protection of civilians during armed conflict involving the use of explosive weapons in populated areas; the commitment to restrict or refrain from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas; and measures to ensure that armed forces, in their policies and practices, take into account the direct and indirect effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, to ensure the marking, clearance and removal or destruction of explosive remnants of war, to support the provision of risk education and to provide, facilitate or support assistance to victims and affected communities.

5. The use of improvised explosive devices in urban settings and against civilian infrastructure has caused significant suffering among civilians globally. Data provided by United Nations programmes from 25 countries and territories identified

¹ See <https://disarmament.unoda.org/ieds>.

3,237 casualties (1,304 killed and 1,933 injured) from improvised explosive devices in 2023 alone.² In addition, 684 casualties (134 killed and 550 injured) were caused by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature. In 2023, civilians remained the most affected, constituting 68 per cent of all casualties from improvised explosive devices. Overall, in 2023, such devices accounted for 48 per cent of all casualties caused by explosive ordnance in 25 countries, which reflects an increase from 40 per cent in 2022. The highest number of casualties in regions with active United Nations mine action operations was reported in Somalia, followed by Mali and Burkina Faso.

6. Between 2020 and 2023, 65 countries and territories were affected by improvised explosive devices.³ Countries such as Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic experienced significant civilian casualties due to improvised explosive devices (S/2024/385). Meanwhile, the Central African Republic saw the first use of such devices. In Afghanistan, despite a reduction in civilian casualties following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, improvised explosive device attacks continued to inflict substantial civilian harm. Between 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded a total of 3,774 civilian casualties (1,095 killed, 2,679 wounded), three quarters of which (701 killed, 2,113 wounded) were caused by indiscriminate attacks using improvised explosive devices in populated areas, including places of worship, schools and markets.⁴

7. In Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere, civilians were indiscriminately killed and injured by improvised explosive devices placed on major roads. In the Central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions, non-State armed groups reportedly employed improvised explosive devices as a tactic against national security forces, using the devices to cut off access and expand territorial control while also hampering humanitarian access and responses. In Burkina Faso, for example, road access to major urban centres has sharply diminished in recent years due to improvised explosive devices, requiring some humanitarian actors to establish air bridges (A/78/259).

8. The use of improvised explosive devices by non-State armed groups and organized criminal entities is a growing threat to refugees, internally displaced persons and host populations, in particular in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions, where the presence of such devices contributes to reduced humanitarian access.⁵

9. Attacks using improvised explosive devices have significant gendered impacts, including distinct health effects and material harm for women and girls. Although men account for most direct casualties of attacks using the devices, there are often unique vulnerabilities facing women and girls. For example, attacks using improvised explosive devices in markets can disproportionately affect women in contexts where they have the primary responsibility for buying food and household goods. They are also affected by the long-term consequences of improvised explosive device attacks, including physical and psychological trauma, displacement, and disruption of social and economic networks. In addition, gender norms can limit their access to health

² Data are drawn from the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2019–2023. Data for 2023 reflect input from 25 countries and territories with active United Nations mine action operations. Data compiled through this mechanism rely on both United Nations and national sources. See www.mineaction.org/en/interactive-dashboard-of-un-mine-action-strategy.

³ Data provided by Action on Armed Violence.

⁴ UNAMA, “Impact of improvised explosive devices on civilians in Afghanistan”, 27 June 2023.

⁵ Project 21, “Protection monitoring note No. 4”, December 2023; and Global Protection Cluster, “Advocacy note: a crucial need to reinforce actions against the growing threat of explosive devices in Niger”, July 2023.

services, assistance and recovery resources, exacerbating the challenges they face in the aftermath of an attack involving an improvised explosive device.⁶

10. The use of improvised explosive devices has exacerbated the scale of grave violations committed against children. The Secretary-General has reported a steady increase in the killing and maiming of children and in attacks on schools and hospitals, in part as a result of the increased use of explosive weapons. The use of explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and landmines, represented some 26 per cent of the methods used in the killing and maiming of children (A/77/895-S/2023/363). Between 2020 and 2023, as verified by the United Nations, at least 2,811 children (67 per cent boys and 33 per cent girls among cases where the gender of the child was known)⁷ lost their lives or were seriously injured as a result of the use of improvised explosive devices. Attacks using such devices accounted for approximately 8 per cent of all verified incidents of killing and maiming of children and for approximately 14 per cent of children killed or maimed by explosive weapons between 2020 and 2023.⁸

11. Men, women and children engage in the trafficking of components and in the manufacture and use of improvised explosive devices for various reasons, including a desire to support an ideology, financial reasons, coercion or a desire to protect themselves or their families. Research indicates that the decision to affiliate with non-State armed groups is often made along a continuum of coercion, especially in the case of women and children, who may experience social and family pressures.⁹ The recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups to act as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices or to manufacture, transport or plant devices, remained of serious concern, in particular in Afghanistan until August 2021 and in the Lake Chad basin region. In Afghanistan, children, especially boys, were used by the Taliban to carry out attacks involving person-borne improvised explosive devices and to manufacture and transport such devices. In 2021, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 58 boys in Afghanistan, some as young as 12, for combat purposes, including participation in attack squads that used person-borne improvised explosive devices, as well as for the manufacturing and transporting of improvised explosive devices. In the Lake Chad basin region, children were recruited by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups to carry improvised explosive devices. In August 2020, a 15-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl were killed by the improvised explosive devices they were carrying, and another three children were killed and eight injured as a result of the detonation.

Developments and trends in manufacture, design and deployment

12. The nature of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices has continued to evolve since the previous report, with widening implications. Non-State armed actors increasingly use such devices, which are inexpensive to fabricate and simple to produce using explosive material from unsecured ammunition or easily available precursors that have legitimate dual uses, such as chemicals commonly used for agricultural purposes or material used in commercial mining. The design, size and

⁶ United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), “Gendered impacts of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas”, April 2024.

⁷ In total, boys accounted for 54.7 per cent (1,539) of the casualties, girls accounted for 26.4 per cent (743), and 18.8 per cent (529) involved a child whose gender was unknown.

⁸ Data provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Figures do not include child casualties from improvised anti-personnel mines.

⁹ Kato Van Broeckhoven and others, *Community Security Actors and the Prospects for Demobilization in the North East of Nigeria* (New York, United Nations University, 2022).

methods of emplacement vary, and tactics continuously evolve to circumvent countermeasures to locate and defuse these devices ([A/78/259](#)).

13. The production and use of improvised anti-personnel mines continued to be widespread, causing the highest number of casualties of any type of mine or explosive remnant of war for the seventh consecutive year in 2022.¹⁰

14. In the Middle East, the threat posed by improvised explosive devices remained serious, with various groups operating in the region employing increasingly similar types of devices and tactics, techniques and procedures. Recent field research in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic by a non-governmental organization indicates that Da'esh produces improvised explosive devices using legacy stockpiles of detonating cord or detonators that were accumulated during the peak of its territorial control in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as by exploiting new, local sources of materiel.¹¹

15. Increasing use of improvised explosive devices in parts of Africa has been reported by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities ([S/2024/92](#)). In Somalia, the first quarter of 2023 saw the highest number of improvised explosive device incidents compared with any other quarter since 2017 due to the intensified use of such devices by Al-Shabaab ([S/2023/443](#)). Al-Shabaab continued to use person-borne and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices as its main weapons. Devices were produced with home-made explosives using nitric acid, sulfuric acid and charcoal, as well as military-grade high explosive harvested from unexploded ordnance or diverted larger calibre ammunition ([S/2023/724](#)).

16. There is evidence of increasing sophistication in the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2024/92](#)). In Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, the threat posed by such devices has reportedly shifted from victim-operated devices to predominantly radio-controlled ones. In field research, a variety of radio-controlled improvised explosive devices has been documented across the region; notably, the same type of remote control units are being used in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, which may suggest that technical information is being shared transnationally between groups in the region.¹²

17. In border areas between the coastal States of West Africa and the countries of the Central Sahel, the use of improvised explosive devices is one of the most recurrent modus operandi in attacks committed by terrorist groups. Overall, the number of reported attacks involving improvised explosives in the region has tripled over the past five years.¹³ Terrorist groups and improvised explosive device networks operating in the region took advantage of porous borders and the dense forests between Sahelian and coastal countries to facilitate cross-border movements, find shelter and prepare terrorist attacks targeting defence and security forces, border posts and civilians.

18. The widespread use of commercial explosives within various civilian sectors is of particular concern. Insecure or poorly managed stocks of commercial explosives pose a significant risk to regional security, and industry engagement is required to secure such stockpiles throughout their life cycle. In West Africa, significant losses

¹⁰ International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2023* (Geneva, 2023).

¹¹ Conflict Armament Research, *After the Caliphate: Islamic State Weapons in High-Profile Operations in North-East Syria* (London, 2024).

¹² See, for example, Conflict Armament Research, *Dispatch from the Field: Weapon Supplies Fuelling Terrorism in the Lake Chad Crisis – Analysis of Illicit Materiel Seized in South-Eastern Niger* (London, 2022).

¹³ According to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project database.

of commercial explosives from local mining industries, either during transfer or transport or from storage after delivery, have been identified. While the use of such materials in improvised explosive devices remained relatively limited, there is a notable potential for these explosive stocks to be targeted for terrorist or criminal exploitation. Although these materials, once diverted, are primarily used for illegal mining, there is evidence of their use by terrorist groups.

19. Tactics, techniques and procedures for the deployment of improvised explosive devices are evolving alongside technological advancements. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the proliferation and use of inexpensive, primarily small uncrewed aerial vehicles by non-State armed groups to deliver improvised explosive devices. This method increases the ability of attackers to deploy such weapons to specific, vulnerable and inaccessible locations, at speed and with accuracy, and expands their potential reach, allowing them to bypass traditional security measures. For instance, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team reported that Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula had undertaken multiple operations using weaponized uncrewed aerial vehicles (S/2023/549). While there is limited evidence to date to suggest that non-State armed groups operating in Africa have successfully modified these systems to include improvised explosives for use in offensive strike operations, there are increasing indications that some groups are developing such capabilities.¹⁴ In response to these developments, in December 2023, the Counter-Terrorism Committee adopted the non-binding guiding principles on threats posed by the use of unmanned aircraft systems for terrorist purposes, known as the Abu Dhabi Guiding Principles (S/2023/1035).

20. The Internet, in particular encrypted messaging applications and dark web platforms, continued to be used to facilitate the sharing of knowledge for the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices and the coordination of attacks across borders. This global network of information exchange has enabled non-State armed groups to construct more sophisticated improvised explosive devices and to execute high-impact attacks without extensive resources. Both the number of groups that have the capacity to use improvised explosive devices and the sophistication of those devices are expected to increase in the coming years as a result of this international knowledge transfer.

Developments in relevant international forums

21. Improvised explosive devices that explode due to presence, proximity or contact of a person are, by definition, antipersonnel mines and are prohibited by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The States parties to the Convention remained seized on the matter of victim-activated improvised explosive devices. In 2023, the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention welcomed the paper entitled “Anti-personnel mine of an improvised nature and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention” (APLC/MSP.21/2023/5), submitted by the President of the Meeting, and took note of the recommendations contained therein, including those on the need to raise awareness of the obligations of States parties to address the humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature within the framework of the Convention. According to the latest information from the Landmine

¹⁴ Bárbara Morais Figueiredo, “Use of uncrewed aerial systems by non-State armed groups in Africa: exploring trends in Africa”, The Use of Uncrewed Systems by Non-State Armed Groups series (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2024).

and Cluster Munition Monitor, at least 24 States parties are believed or known to have contamination arising from improvised mines.¹⁵

22. The humanitarian impact of improvised explosive devices continued to be addressed under the framework of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. In 2021, at the twenty-third Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention, the High Contracting Parties adopted the Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices (see [CCW/AP.II/CONF.23/6](#), annex V). In that Declaration, the High Contracting Parties expressed their profound concern at the indiscriminate use and effects of improvised explosive devices and at the increasing global impact of attacks involving improvised explosive devices worldwide, in particular through the perpetration of terrorist acts. They also recognized that addressing the threat posed by improvised explosive devices required action in relevant forums, at appropriate levels and by multiple stakeholders, including through Amended Protocol II, and that such action should take into account the humanitarian, political and socioeconomic and security impacts of improvised explosive devices.

23. The matter of improvised explosive devices has been addressed since 2009 under the framework of the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-traps and Other Devices as Amended on 3 May 1996 (Protocol II as amended on 3 May 1996). Since 2020, the meetings of the Group of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II have continued to facilitate the sharing of information on national situations and of general observations by the High Contracting Parties. The meetings also enable the High Contracting Parties to remain apprised of relevant developments in other forums addressing the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, with a view to ensuring complementarity of efforts. At the two most recent meetings of the Group of Experts, the High Contracting Parties also had the opportunity to exchange views on the need to have a coordinated approach when developing national and regional responses to improvised explosive devices ([CCW/AP.II/CONF.24/2](#) and [CCW/AP.II/CONF.25/2](#)). The High Contracting Parties also continue to share information through a revised voluntary questionnaire on international cooperation in countering improvised explosive devices, adopted at the twenty-third Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties (see [CCW/AP.II/CONF.23/6](#), para. 34 (d)), which is aimed at enhancing international cooperation and assistance and strengthening national capacities.

24. The Security Council has considered the issue of improvised explosive devices on several occasions in recent years. During an open debate on mine action in April 2021, the Council adopted a statement by the President on strengthening mine action to address the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices ([S/PRST/2021/8](#)). In May 2021, at a meeting on the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers, the Council adopted a statement by the President underscoring the importance of ensuring that all peacekeepers in the field are equipped, informed and trained to mitigate the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices ([S/PRST/2021/11](#)). The Council has also taken important steps to address terrorist use of improvised explosive devices through resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and relevant subsequent resolutions, calling upon Member States to eliminate the supply of weapons, including improvised explosive device components, to those involved in terrorist acts.

25. In 2022, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), under the Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement

¹⁵ International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2023*.

relating to Counter-Terrorism of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, compiled technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and related international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons. The guidelines support efforts by Member States to prevent and counter the acquisition of weapons, including improvised explosive device components, by terrorists. With a view to promoting the use and application of the technical guidelines, regional workshops were held with 43 Member States in Europe, the Caribbean, East Africa, the Sahel and the Maghreb.

26. The General Assembly, in its resolution [77/298](#) on the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted in June 2023, condemned the continued flow of weapons, including improvised explosive devices and their components, to and between terrorists and encouraged Member States to prevent and disrupt procurement networks. It also called upon Member States to find ways of intensifying the exchange of information regarding this matter and to enhance coordination, and urged them to establish as criminal offences the illegal manufacture, possession, stockpiling and trade of components used to manufacture improvised explosives.

27. Other notable developments have occurred under the framework of the General Assembly. In line with the recommendation of the open-ended working group on conventional ammunition, which concluded its work in June 2023, the Assembly, in its resolution [78/47](#), adopted the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see [A/78/111](#), annex) in December 2023, calling upon all States to implement the Global Framework. Expressing grave concern over the risks posed by the diversion of conventional ammunition and the trafficking of such ammunition into illicit markets, including for the subsequent use in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, Member States committed themselves to 15 objectives and identified 85 related measures pertaining to promoting the safety, security and sustainability of through-life conventional ammunition management.

28. The issue of improvised explosive devices was also addressed under the framework of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, through which States condemned the use of improvised explosive devices directed against civilians or civilian objects and other violations of international humanitarian law, including by non-State armed groups. At the first follow-up conference to review implementation of the Declaration, held in Oslo in April 2024, the use of improvised explosive devices by non-State armed groups in populated areas, often involving increasingly sophisticated technologies, was raised as a matter of particular concern.

United Nations whole-of-system approach

29. In accordance with the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General, the Mine Action Service continued to convene an inter-agency coordinating task force on a whole-of-system approach to countering improvised explosive devices. Bringing together relevant political, humanitarian, human rights, development and counter-terrorism entities, the task force serves as a dedicated forum for sharing information, doctrines, operational principles, technical knowledge and good practices. The task force strengthens a common understanding of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and promotes consistency in the use of related terminology.

30. On the basis of an organizational mapping of United Nations entities engaged in matters related to improvised explosive devices, a United Nations whole-of-system

approach to countering such devices was developed. It addresses the efforts and capabilities of United Nations entities to support Member States and other stakeholders across the spectrum of improvised explosive device prevention, preparedness, protection, threat mitigation and response (see table). The approach serves to illustrate how multiple, interdependent entities with differing capabilities and mandates are required to address the entire response cycle pertaining to improvised explosive devices.

United Nations whole-of-system approach to countering improvised explosive devices

<i>Upstream activities</i>	<i>Downstream activities</i>
Assessment of capabilities and threats	Improvised explosive device response: render safe
Advocacy, policy, legislation and regulations	Improvised explosive device response: scene exploitation
Security and control of explosives	Recovered evidence analysis
Education on improvised explosive device risk	Information management
Development of capabilities to counter-improvised explosive devices	Technical exploitation of recovered devices
Border controls	Identification of perpetrators
Control of precursors	Victim assistance
Regional and international cooperation and information-sharing	Judicial process
Intelligence-led operations	Development of countermeasures

Note: The approach is based on the UNIDIR counter-improvised explosive device capability maturity model and self-assessment tool.

31. In support of the United Nations whole-of-system approach to countering improvised explosive devices, United Nations efforts, resources and skills were identified within each upstream and downstream response measure, producing a visualization of the contributions of all relevant entities. That model was refined to develop an interactive toolbox that serves to describe in detail the capabilities of each system entity. The toolbox is used to facilitate cross-pillar cooperation and dialogue and enhance synergies through the sharing of resources, data and expertise. It provides a comprehensive overview of activities by United Nations entities and of available technological innovations. The toolbox serves to highlight the commitment of the United Nations system to a coordinated and multifaceted response to the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

III. Awareness-raising

Risk education

32. Risk education is a crucial component of the global response to countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. Increasing the understanding of these

threats among civilians is essential to fostering social, institutional and behavioural changes that enhance the protection of civilians and save lives. The unique characteristics of improvised explosive devices, such as their varied components, designs and methods of deployment, present specific challenges for education on explosive ordnance risks. Because of those complexities, it can be difficult to develop effective messages and materials for risk education and to select age-, gender-, disability- and diversity-sensitive delivery methods that can be used successfully to promote behaviour change in affected populations. To address these challenges, a new technical note on risk education for improvised explosive devices was developed as part of the International Mine Action Standards, under the coordination of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, and published in November 2022. The technical note specifically addresses issues related to community engagement and mass messaging in environments where the increasing use of improvised explosive devices creates new risks for civilians.

33. In 2023, UNICEF provided, as a primary prevention measure, education on explosive ordnance risks, including those related to improvised explosive devices, to over 7.7 million children in 17 affected countries. In Yemen, UNICEF prioritized risk education campaigns designed to reach as many people as possible, through either mass messaging or community engagement. In 2023, over 800,000 conflict-affected people, including 557,541 children (46 per cent of them girls) received life-saving messages on risk education through schools, child-friendly spaces, interventions in temporary settlements and other community gatherings. To broaden the reach of those messages and promote an inclusive approach, sign language was used, including for messages on how to recognize and manage risks related to improvised explosive devices. In the Syrian Arab Republic, through a collaboration with the Ministry of Education, education on improvised explosive device risks has been integrated into the official national school curriculum for almost all grades.

34. Risk education, including for improvised explosive devices, was also provided by the Mine Action Service in several countries. In the Central African Republic, the Service provided education and launched awareness campaigns on improvised explosive device risks for civilians, United Nations personnel, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. In Libya, the Service launched awareness campaigns with risk education messaging and posters focused on victim-operated devices, including improvised explosive devices. Specific awareness messages on improvised explosive devices were also embedded in risk education materials in Afghanistan. In Somalia, support was provided to the national authorities for the development of a risk education package on improvised explosive devices. In Iraq, the Service conducted risk education campaigns using in-person sessions, media campaigns, minefield warning signs and digital technology, which included messages on improvised explosive devices. In north-east Nigeria, risk education messaging has been adapted to take into account the increase in incidents involving such devices since October 2023, as well as the relocation of internally displaced people. In Burkina Faso, risk education campaigns for community members and humanitarian workers were conducted in the regions most affected by improvised explosive devices. In Mali, civil society organizations, with support from the United Nations, launched a community mechanism for reporting explosive devices to security and defence forces for safe disposal.

Awareness-raising among stakeholders, including the private sector

35. Various initiatives have been undertaken with a view towards promoting a comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the threat of improvised

explosive devices and raising awareness among relevant industries and corporate actors of the need to bolster global supply chain security for precursor materials.

36. Since 2018, INTERPOL has led the Global Congress on Chemical Security and Emerging Threats, fostering multi-sector global cooperation, dialogue and partnership to combat chemical and explosive threats. The Congress brings together industry representatives, policymakers, regulators, members of law enforcement, military representatives, customs officials, civil society and academia. Its annual plenary meeting promotes public-private partnerships, the exchange of expertise and information-sharing on emerging threats and good practices, which has resulted in more timely sharing and dissemination of threat information.

37. In November 2022, WCO held a global conference on Programme Global Shield, which is aimed at preventing terrorists and criminals from gaining access to dual-use explosive precursors and improvised explosive device components. Representatives from Member States, partner organizations and industry, along with experts, exchanged good practices and discussed challenges related to threat mitigation, focusing on supply chain vulnerabilities, customs enforcement and capacity-building. Insights from industry served to highlight Internet security and the online sale of chemicals as significant challenges. Emphasis was placed on the need for stronger partnerships between the private sector and customs administrations to mitigate risks associated with the trade of dual-use explosive precursors and improvised explosive device components.

IV. Prevention and preparedness

National assessments, strategies and regulations

38. Countering threats posed by improvised explosive devices requires a comprehensive, multidimensional and whole-of-system approach that covers prevention, preparedness, protection, threat mitigation and response. Such an approach benefits from the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including relevant national authorities, civil society organizations, commercial and industry entities, academia and research institutions, as well as international, regional and non-governmental organizations.

39. The United Nations has continued to support the development of national strategies and regulations aimed at addressing evolving threats from improvised explosive devices. In 2022, the Organization facilitated the development of a comprehensive national strategy on countering improvised explosive devices in Burkina Faso. Similarly, that same year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) supported the endorsement of national improvised explosive device standards ([A/78/259](#)).

40. For national assessments, Member States have used, applied and supported the deployment of the voluntary UNIDIR counter-improvised explosive device capability maturity model and self-assessment tool.¹⁶ The tool enables Member States to comprehensively assess their capability for countering threats posed by improvised explosive devices, identify potential gaps and challenges in national regulatory and control systems, gauge the likely scale of contributions and define priorities for

¹⁶ Bob Seddon and Alfredo Malaret Baldo, *Counter-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2020). The model and tool are currently available in English, French, Spanish and four South-East Asian languages.

strengthening national capabilities. Since 2020, at least 18 States in three regions¹⁷ have used the tool, in cooperation with UNIDIR, the Mine Action Service, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Development Programme, Nonviolence International Southeast Asia and the Small Arms Survey. In March 2024, UNIDIR published an interactive online map of global use of the model and tool to facilitate information-sharing.¹⁸

41. Since 2020, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, has conducted assessments in 26 States.¹⁹ The recommendations derived from these assessments underscore the need to enhance the capabilities of national authorities in various areas, including identifying improvised explosive device components and perpetrators, tracking and restricting access to such components and strengthening security measures to protect critical infrastructure against terrorist acts. To achieve this, the Committee recommends the establishment of national legal frameworks for controlling access to improvised explosive device components.

42. Since 2023, INTERPOL, through its Chemical and Explosives Terrorism Prevention Programme, has conducted national assessments in Cameroon, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines and Thailand to enhance the ability of law enforcement agencies to prevent, detect, respond to and investigate criminal or terrorist incidents involving chemical or explosive materials. Tailored in-country programmes have been developed on the basis of the threat landscape, identified needs and capability gaps and have been implemented.

Regional approaches, cooperation and information-sharing

43. Owing to the transnational nature of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, regional approaches that complement national-level strategies are required.

44. Between 2021 and April 2024, at least six West African States assessed their national capability for countering improvised explosive devices using the UNIDIR model and tool. Those States identified gaps and challenges and defined priorities for addressing the threat posed by such devices, including through regional and international cooperation and assistance. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member States have exchanged information on effective national measures and practices for addressing threats posed by improvised explosive devices, as well as for identifying opportunities for enhancing regional cooperation. At the end of 2023, ECOWAS initiated a regional process to develop a strategy to counter the proliferation and use of improvised explosive devices in the region. This ongoing process is nationally and regionally led, owned and driven. UNIDIR, UNODC, other United Nations entities, Small Arms Survey and Mines Advisory Group provide research, technical assistance and support to ECOWAS and its member States in their efforts to develop and implement a regional strategy.

45. The West Africa Capacity-Building Working Group of the Global Counterterrorism Forum held a meeting in June 2023 on countering terrorist

¹⁷ Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Maldives, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Yemen.

¹⁸ See the interactive usage map for the counter-improvised explosive device capability maturity model and self-assessment tool, available at: <https://unidir.org/publication/counter-ied-capability-maturity-model-and-self-assessment-tool#c-ied>.

¹⁹ Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Montenegro, Nigeria, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Spain, Sudan, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

improvised explosive device networks, which was followed by a second meeting in December 2023 on preventing terrorist groups from acquiring small arms and light weapons, associated ammunition and uncrewed aircraft systems. The recommendations from both meetings serve to unveil synergies in efforts to mitigate and respond to the threat of improvised explosive devices, small arms and light weapons and uncrewed aircraft systems. In the outcome documents of both meetings, mention is made of the need to develop adequate legal and institutional frameworks, strengthen domestic coordination and cross-border cooperation through focal points and coordination platforms, and establish effective tracing mechanisms in relation to improvised explosive devices, small arms and light weapons, and uncrewed aerial vehicles.

46. The United Nations provided advice and technical support to the African Union for the development of its strategy for countering improvised explosive devices. The strategy is currently under review by the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security for validation and subsequent adoption by States members of the African Union. The strategy will be aimed at facilitating cooperation and coordination between the African Union, its member States, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, the United Nations and other partners in developing and implementing counter-improvised explosive device initiatives to address the growing threat to States members of the African Union and to its peace support operations.

47. Since 2022, two South-East Asian States have conducted pilot tests of the UNIDIR model and tool. In July 2023, UNIDIR and specialized organizations brought together five South-East Asian states for a regional workshop, hosted by Thailand, to examine common threats and challenges, exchange effective national measures and practices, and identify concrete options and avenues for regional cooperation and information-sharing.

48. In February 2024, the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons convened a regional conference on addressing the humanitarian impact of improvised anti-personnel mines within the framework of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Bringing together representatives from more than 40 Member States and international and non-governmental organizations, the Conference provided a forum for exchanging information and good practices to address the threat arising from the use of improvised anti-personnel mines by armed non-State actors in West Africa and the Sahel region, including the resulting new contamination.

Security and control of ammunition and explosives

49. Often, improvised explosive devices are produced with the energetic components of diverted conventional ammunition. To prevent the diversion of conventional ammunition, Member States have established international arms control instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty; the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Recently, the General Assembly adopted resolution [78/47](#), by which it decided to adopt the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. States have committed themselves to 15 objectives covering a range of aspects aimed at promoting the safety, security and sustainability of through-life conventional ammunition management to address the risks associated with conventional ammunition at every stage of its life cycle. Measures identified to reduce the risk of diversion include promoting transparency in

supply chains, analysing diversion risks prior to transfers, enhancing marking and record-keeping for tracing purposes, strengthening physical security of ammunition stockpiles, clearing unexploded or abandoned ordnances, disposing of obsolete or surplus stockpiles and improving ammunition diversion investigations through data collection, cooperation and information-sharing.

50. The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, developed at the request of the General Assembly in 2011, provide practical guidance on the safe and secure management of ammunition stockpiles. The Assembly, in its resolution [78/47](#), requested the Secretary-General to also develop voluntary operational guidelines related to security aspects of the through-life management of conventional ammunition in the framework of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines.

Control of precursor components, materials and chemicals

51. Explosive precursors are chemical substances that can be used in the illicit manufacture of home-made explosives. The challenge of dual-use materials is that they have legitimate uses for State defence and security purposes, as well as for activities such as quarrying, mining, construction, borehole drilling and land clearance. The extent of national legislation on the control and licensing of explosive precursor chemicals varies significantly across States.

52. Effective control of explosive precursors requires strengthened cooperation between the private sector and law enforcement authorities. Through assessments undertaken by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, good practices among Member States in this regard have been identified. In the western hemisphere and Asia, outreach programmes have been implemented with a view to educating industries on the identification of suspicious purchases of explosive precursors to prevent access to improvised explosive device components, and to linking relevant industries to law enforcement agencies, enabling them to respond to potential unlawful purchases.

53. The INTERPOL Chemical Risk Identification and Mitigation Project is aimed at developing the capacity of member countries to identify, reduce and mitigate the risk posed by weaponized chemicals and their explosive precursors. Through the project, INTERPOL works with and supports Governments, law enforcement, academia, the chemical industry and partners in efforts to develop a risk matrix of the most significant chemicals of concern and agree on a process of chemical security countermeasures.

54. Through its Programme Global Shield, WCO has developed a comprehensive analysis of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, the legitimate movement of explosive precursors and other materials commonly used to manufacture improvised explosive devices, and relevant customs seizures. Information is shared with members on a quarterly basis to enhance risk assessment by national customs authorities.

55. Through its portfolio of 20 courses on countering terrorism, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, within the Office of Counter-Terrorism, has enhanced the capacities of over 400 participants from nine Member States in preventing and responding to the threat of terrorist use of chemical materials and precursors.

Border control

56. Improvised explosive device networks establish connections for the illicit movement of components, expertise, finances and personnel, often operating across

international borders and posing significant transnational security challenges. The cross-border movement of individuals with expertise in such devices could lead to the transfer of manufacturing and deployment skills, and increased collaboration between terrorist groups. Such networks may source or produce explosives and components in different States than the ones in which they intend to use them, highlighting their extensive reach. For instance, research in West Africa from 2019 to 2022 indicates Boko Haram's improvised explosive device networks span across Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria, with Ghana and Guinea identified as sources of components and Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo as transit States. These networks also support the trafficking of explosives used in gold mining, which can finance armed groups.²⁰ Effective border controls are essential to disrupting these networks and are a critical component of preventive efforts to counter improvised explosive devices.

57. Assessments undertaken by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate have identified a need to enhance the capacities of border and customs officials to detect, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of illicit manufacturing of, trafficking in and diversion of precursor chemicals commonly used for improvised explosive devices, including through support in tracing and analysing seizure data.

58. Programme Global Shield continued its multidisciplinary approach to enhancing the capacity of customs officers to identify and interdict the illegal movement of 13 most-used explosive precursor chemicals, one metal and other components implicated in the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices, and to report suspicious transactions to national law enforcement agencies. The Programme is aimed at bolstering capabilities in risk assessment, profiling and detection within supply chains, in addition to facilitating joint enforcement operations and offering advanced data analytical products. Awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives have focused on activities in Africa, South-East Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as South-Eastern Europe.

59. Transnational illicit flows of precursor materials, including their trafficking through the Internet, can be exploited by non-State armed groups and criminal groups to produce improvised explosive devices. To address these vulnerabilities, UNODC, in collaboration with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the International Organization for Migration and INTERPOL, launched the Integrated Border Stability Mechanism for West Africa in 2023 in Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire. The Mechanism supports West African States, donors and implementing organizations in strengthening border governance and security, including the countering of illicit trafficking in improvised explosive device components. In addition, UNODC provided visit, board, search and seizure training activities, including on countering vessel-borne improvised explosive devices, to law enforcement officials of maritime centres in Kenya, Maldives, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

Develop of capabilities to counter improvised explosive devices

60. The United Nations prioritizes the development of sustainable and robust capabilities to prevent, mitigate and respond to the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. In 2023, UNODC conducted national capacity-building activities on countering illicit trafficking and use of dual-use items for the manufacturing of such devices for law enforcement, customs, intelligence, immigration and airport security officials in Indonesia, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, and Uganda. In West Africa, UNODC provided technical assistance on countering improvised explosive devices focused on border areas to enhance regional security, strengthening the

²⁰ Small Arms Survey, *Out of Control: The Trafficking of Improvised Explosive Device Components and Commercial Explosives in West Africa* (Geneva, November 2023).

capacity of 123 criminal justice, security and intelligence personnel from eight States²¹ to detect illicit activities and the smuggling of improvised explosive device components and to investigate and prosecute terrorism-related crimes.

61. Since 2021, the Office of Counter-Terrorism's programme on countering terrorist threats against vulnerable targets has launched six guides on the protection of critical infrastructure and soft targets, implemented 70 activities that engaged more than 2,700 individuals and created a global network of experts with 200 members from over 80 Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The programme assists Member States in preventing, protecting, mitigating, responding to and recovering from terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure and public places.

62. Since 2020, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, UNODC, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office for Disarmament Affairs have supported States in Central Asia in addressing the terrorism-arms-crime nexus and countering illicit trafficking in improvised explosive device components, as well as in increasing effective international cooperation and information exchange.

63. Since November 2023, the Global Terrorism Threats Facility, a joint initiative of the European Union and the United Nations, has provided technical assistance to Togo to counter the threat of improvised explosive devices. This support has increased awareness among the local population, strengthened the operational capabilities of the national counter-improvised explosive device centre and improved the management of related information.

Intelligence-gathering, analysis and sharing

64. Intelligence-gathering, analysis and sharing among customs, police and other law enforcement agencies is crucial for identifying trafficking routes and networks involved in the supply and use of improvised explosive devices.

65. Project Watchmaker of INTERPOL continued to support the ability of member countries to prevent and respond to chemical or explosive attacks and threats by collecting, analysing and sharing intelligence on bomb-makers, devices, materials and networks. Since 2020, INTERPOL, through Project Watchmaker, has enlarged its data collection and information-sharing network, covering South-East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, East Africa, North Africa, South America and Central Asia. To support investigations, INTERPOL coordinates the exchange of information and intelligence, including the sourcing of component material, device profiling, signature characterization, and trend and pattern analysis, as well as tactics, techniques and procedures related to chemical and explosive incidents. In addition, INTERPOL has developed and started implementing the Project Watchmaker counter-improvised explosive device training course to support member countries in their investigations.

66. Programme Global Shield of WCO has established a global network of national contact points for exchanging information and good practices, discussing emerging trends and addressing challenges. Since 2022, Project GLOBAL of Programme Global Shield has focused on secure information-sharing to dismantle illicit improvised explosive device networks and the delivery of data analysis on the dynamics of improvised explosive devices. The Customs Enforcement Network Communication Platform enables secure information exchange on potential threats, risky shipments, monitoring of the licit movement of 13 explosive precursor chemicals and other related components, and the documentation of seizures. Products

²¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

that provide comprehensive analysis products are offered, giving insights into trends and patterns in the trafficking of explosive precursors and improvised explosive device components.

V. Mitigation and response

Improvised explosive device threat mitigation

67. The Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative has incorporated measures to address the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, committing to increase counter-improvised explosive device training to improve peacekeeper safety. Accordingly, the Mine Action Service has continued to provide predeployment and in-mission training, including in risk awareness, search and detect and disposal, as well as mentoring to peacekeeping units and other threat mitigation activities in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia. For example, with the support of the Mine Action Service, Malian Defence and Security Forces have developed a capacity of 37 trained explosive ordnance response teams to detect and render safe explosive devices, enabling them to deploy to high-risk areas and protect the civilian population.

68. The Mine Action Service engaged with national and regional training centres in Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to assist in the development and delivery of training on disposal and threat mitigation aligned with the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards. These activities improved national and regional predeployment training programmes and built the counter-improvised explosive device capacities of police- and troop-contributing countries. At recent Peacekeeping Ministerial Meetings, Member States pledged contributions to counter-improvised explosive device training and services for United Nations peace operations.

69. Underscoring the importance it places on the safety and security of peacekeepers, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide an independent strategic review of the responses of United Nations peacekeeping operations to improvised explosive devices, assessing capabilities and measures necessary to better mitigate that threat ([S/PRST/2021/11](#)). The subsequent report, entitled "The United Nations response to explosive ordnance threats: a more coherent approach is needed" ([S/2021/1042](#), annex), released in December 2021, provides cross-cutting and mission-specific recommendations relating to police- and troop-contributing country readiness in terms of training and equipment to operate within a context affected by the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, procedures to centralize information management processes, and the development of strategies and processes. To coordinate the implementation of these recommendations, a working group, led by the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support, has been established, bringing together peacekeeping operations most affected by explosive ordnance threats.

70. In March 2024, the Department of Peace Operations issued the counter-improvised explosive device strategy for peacekeeping operations, providing guidance for a coherent and synergistic response to mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices in peacekeeping contexts.²² The strategy is focused on strengthening existing United Nations efforts within the three pillars of preparing peacekeepers, defeating the device and degrading the network. In addition, a comprehensive revision of peacekeeping guidance documents related to improvised

²² Available at the Peacekeeping Resource Hub.

explosive devices has been undertaken to ensure that lessons learned from peacekeeping missions are captured and available to inform future peacekeeping requirements. This resulted in a review of the Improvised Explosive Device Threat Mitigation Handbook and the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Military Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Manual to provide guidance for preparing deployed uniformed peacekeepers, as well as enhance the capability of peacekeeping missions to plan against and react to the threat posed by such devices. The Military Engineer Unit and Counter Explosive Threat Search and Detect Manual and the Military Infantry Unit Manual have also been updated to incorporate the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards.

71. Contingents of police- and troop-contributing countries deploying to the most-affected peacekeeping missions require adequate training and equipment for the threat environment. The Department of Peace Operations revised statements of unit requirements and contingent-owned equipment lists for units deploying to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MONUSCO and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to ensure that adequate technical capabilities and equipment are available to effectively operate in high-risk missions. The Working Group on Contingent-Owned Equipment revised the Contingent-Owned Equipment Manual to reflect the recommendations of the independent strategic review to include requirements for military forensic exploitation capacities and capability-based reimbursement of armoured personnel carriers and initiated a subgroup to study needed improvements in mine-protected vehicles.

72. The Security Council has continued to mandate peace operations to support national capacities in countering improvised explosive devices. Given the impact of explosive ordnance contamination in Afghanistan, the Security Council, in its resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#), mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to coordinate explosive ordnance threat mitigation measures. By resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), the Council mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq on issues related to the clearance of landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. In Somalia, pursuant to resolutions [2628 \(2022\)](#) and [2705 \(2023\)](#), the Mine Action Service, as a component of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, provided improvised explosive device threat mitigation support to troop-contributing countries deployed with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia through the provision of predeployment and in-country training, specialized equipment, expert advice and mentoring ([A/78/259](#)).

Clearance and disposal methods

73. In response to the evolving threat posed by improvised explosive devices, approaches to countering such devices increasingly include the deployment of advanced detection technologies, such as ground-penetrating radar and artificial intelligence-based pattern recognition systems, to identify device components and predict likely deployment locations. Military and law enforcement agencies are also developing more sophisticated explosive ordnance disposal techniques, including multi-sensor, multi-weapon, multi-environment robotic systems, to safely neutralize devices. The United Nations has initiated the use of uncrewed aerial systems in peace operation settings. Such aerial systems can provide various capabilities, such as those related to explosive ordnance reconnaissance technical surveys, remote detection, support for search and detect activities and post-blast analysis, and force protection.

74. In 2021, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining published the Improvised Explosive Device Clearance Good Practice Guide, which was tailored

for mine action personnel involved in search and disposal. Aligned with the International Mine Action Standards, the Guide institutionalizes improvised explosive device clearance within humanitarian principles and focuses on operational planning, survey, search and disposal techniques. Addressing urban, semi-urban and rural contexts, the Guide includes an emphasis on good practice in search and disposal, supporting safe and effective clearance operations in post-conflict environments. In addition, the Improvised Explosive Device Indicators and Ground Sign Awareness Handbook was launched in 2020 to inform survey, clearance and risk education practitioners in the development of methodologies, approaches and tools that are specific to environments contaminated with improvised explosive devices.

Evidence collection, analysis and investigation

75. Implementing robust evidence collection mechanisms and thorough analysis ensures that admissible evidence is gathered, which facilitates the prosecution and conviction of traffickers, makers and users of improvised explosive devices.

76. In 2023, INTERPOL released standard operating guidelines on chemical crime scene recovery and sampling, as well as an incident exhibit book, providing a unified process for facilitating an investigation and retrieving, packaging and transporting or conveying samples and exhibits from a conventional or contaminated environment with forensic and evidential integrity.

77. INTERPOL continued to support specialized capacity-building and training for member countries in post-blast investigation and forensic recovery. Courses included those relating to post-blast investigation, chemical anti-smuggling enforcement, command and control in hazardous environments, chemical awareness scene management and emergency services first responder awareness, which strengthen the capability of law enforcement agencies and other relevant national entities to investigate contaminated crime scenes, to recover evidence safely and with integrity, and to identify, detect and investigate those involved in planning, preparing or committing a chemical explosive incident and successfully prosecute them.

78. In 2023, UNODC conducted several training programmes across Africa and in the Philippines to enhance the skills of investigators, law enforcement and military officials in responding to terrorism-related improvised explosive device incidents. These programmes focused on crime scene management, post-blast investigations and evidence collection. Regional training sessions held in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and other countries were aimed at security and justice sector officials from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger and Togo, and emphasized cross-border cooperation and battlefield evidence collection. The training sessions highlighted the critical role of first responders and the need for coordinated efforts among law enforcement, forensic teams and intelligence agencies to ensure effective investigations and prosecutions.

Victim assistance

79. Every year, thousands of people injured by improvised explosive devices incur lasting physical and cognitive impairment. Victim assistance is essential to address the immediate and long-term needs and the rights of those victims, and is a key component of national and international responses to such devices. Most incidents involving these devices occur in countries where health-care systems have been weakened by years of armed conflict. In these contexts, victim assistance often depends on humanitarian organizations with decreasing resources. Where possible, the United Nations is coordinating with national and international organizations to

improve service mapping and referrals. There is a need to enhance victim assistance to provide medical care, rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as socioeconomic inclusion, to survivors of improvised explosive devices incidents and their families. To guide this multisectoral effort, International Mine Action Standard 13.10 on victim assistance in mine action was published in January 2023.

80. Immediate post-blast care is vital to reducing preventable deaths and disabilities from improvised explosive devices incidents. A comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to victim assistance must encompass all stages of care, beginning with emergency response from the point of injury, pre-hospital care and transport, until definitive care can be provided at a health-care facility, in addition to mental health and psychosocial support and long-term rehabilitation. To address existing gaps in acute post-injury care, coordination among health-care providers, military and security forces, non-governmental organizations and community members is essential, and the expertise of humanitarian mine action actors in trauma care can be leveraged in that regard. In addition, cooperation and coordination in information management and information-sharing among different organizations is important to advance assistance assessments and the mapping of services, and for referrals to service providers.

81. The United Nations continued to support service mapping and referral pathways, which link victims of explosive ordnance to services provided by the State or other partners, and to provide direct assistance for victims. For instance, in 2023, UNICEF provided victim assistance to 3,843 children who had experienced injuries due to explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices, in 11 countries affected by these devices.

VI. Concluding observations and recommendations

82. The continued threat posed by improvised explosive devices remains a serious global challenge. Due to the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the threat, the proliferation and use of such devices has a negative impact on peace, security and sustainable development around the world, and significantly hampers humanitarian assistance and peace operations. In response, States and other relevant stakeholders have utilized various international and regional instruments and processes that cover humanitarian disarmament, arms control, mine action, counter-terrorism and trade controls. **States and relevant stakeholders are encouraged to consider ways to strengthen the global architecture and response to promote a coordinated, comprehensive approach to addressing the threat and impact of improvised explosive devices. This could include:**

(a) **Examining current options and opportunities to better utilize United Nations processes for countering the threats posed by improvised explosive devices;**

(b) **Facilitating exchanges and knowledge management across relevant humanitarian disarmament and arms control instruments;**

(c) **Promoting the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and seeking adherence to its commitments by all parties to armed conflict, including non-State armed groups.**²³

²³ Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, para. 4.8.

83. The Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace provides an opportunity for renewed action on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, from a supply and a demand perspective simultaneously. In line with the call for reducing the human cost of weapons, **States are encouraged to adopt an integrated approach to improvised explosive devices that bridges security responses with initiatives for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustainable development, with the aim of understanding and addressing the underlying causes and socioeconomic drivers of the trafficking of components and use of improvised explosive devices.**

84. Comprehensive and integrated approaches to countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices require a better understanding of their differential impacts on women, men, boys and girls, including how various gender and age groups engage in the trafficking of components and in the manufacture and use of these devices due to gendered roles, norms and expectations. **To inform the development and implementation of national and regional counter-improvised explosive device strategies, States are encouraged to strengthen the collection, storage, analysis and dissemination of gender- and age-disaggregated data. Specifically, casualty data disaggregated by cause, effect, age, sex, disability, date and location are essential for identifying priority areas and groups, and for developing targeted, gender- and age-sensitive and accessible programmes in advocacy, clearance, risk education and victim assistance. Furthermore, States should promote the meaningful participation of women and diverse stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, across all aspects of prevention, preparedness, protection, threat mitigation and response.**

85. Effective risk education interventions require thorough assessments of the specific contexts and tailored risk management approaches. A nuanced understanding of the differential impacts of improvised explosive devices on different gender and age groups and persons with disabilities, as well as of the social and cultural norms that shape the behaviours and roles of different groups in conflict zones, is essential. **States are encouraged to use and promote the new International Mine Action Standards technical note on risk education for improvised explosive devices and ensure that risk education campaigns are inclusive and accessible to all, taking into consideration such factors as gender, age and disability.**

86. Victim assistance requires a long-term commitment and holistic, integrated, gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and multisector approaches. **States are encouraged to enhance victim assistance to address the needs and rights of victims of improvised explosive devices and to implement International Mine Action Standard 13.10 on victim assistance in mine action. States are further encouraged to integrate victim assistance in regional and national strategies designed to counter improvised explosive devices, including to strengthen acute post-injury care, reduce preventable death and disability and improve long-term rehabilitation and socioeconomic reintegration for survivors.**

87. Efforts to prevent and counter the threat posed by improvised explosive devices should make use of complementarities with initiatives to prevent and counter the threat posed by the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms, including small arms and light weapons, and ammunition, and should take into account expertise and tools that have been developed in that context. International conventional arms control instruments, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument and the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, offer concrete measures to counter the use of diverted ammunition for the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices.

88. When improvised explosive devices endanger United Nations mission personnel, mandate delivery is threatened. To effectively assess and respond to this threat in areas of operation, fulfil their civilian protection mandates and foster intelligence-led operations, United Nations peace operations require intelligence capabilities, including weapons technical intelligence and forensics, as well as information management systems for safely and securely holding and sharing relevant information.²⁴ **States are encouraged to support peace operations deployed to high-threat environments, including through the provision of equipment and of bilateral training in line with United Nations standards, as well as the reinforcement of expertise, guidance and procedures for weapons technical intelligence.**

89. The increasing use by States in different regions of the UNIDIR counter-improvised explosive device capability maturity model and self-assessment tool, which promotes a comprehensive, integrated and whole-of-government approach to countering threats posed by such devices, is encouraging. In this regard, **States are encouraged:**

(a) **To continue using the UNIDIR tool to assess their national capabilities;**

(b) **To provide technical assistance to other States, where needed and requested, through relevant processes and international cooperation and assistance mechanisms, on the basis of evidence generated from the use of the tool;**

(c) **To share information generated by the use of the tool through relevant processes and platforms. States could consider sharing information on effective national and regional measures through the establishment of a dedicated platform or online compendium for gathering and generating knowledge on such measures;**

(d) **To utilize the technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 2370 (2017), in combination with the UNIDIR tool, to assess their national capabilities. States affected by threats posed by terrorist use of improvised explosive devices could voluntarily undertake a self-assessment using the UNIDIR tool and utilize results more broadly to inform the Counter-Terrorism Committee's country visits and assessments.**

90. Given the transnational nature of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, regional approaches, cooperation and information-sharing among States, international and regional organizations and the private sector are essential and should be further strengthened. **States are encouraged to develop and implement regional and subregional strategies to address region-specific challenges related to the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.**

91. The weaponization of uncrewed aerial vehicles by non-State armed groups through the inclusion of conventional ammunition and improvised explosive payloads is a concerning development and constitutes an expanding threat for civilians, humanitarian actors, and defence and security personnel. **There is a need for enhanced understanding of the emerging trend of uncrewed aerial vehicles being used to deploy improvised explosive devices and its implications for national and regional security and stability, with a view to developing and implementing appropriate prevention and response measures. To address this threat, States are encouraged to consider the implementation of the non-binding guiding principles**

²⁴ Emile LeBrun and David Lochhead, "Exploiting evidence, improving protection: weapons technical intelligence in UN peace operations" (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, June 2024).

on threats posed by the use of unmanned aircraft systems for terrorist purposes (S/2023/1035).

92. Reducing the ability of non-State armed groups and organized criminal entities to manufacture and deploy improvised explosive devices requires strengthening the regulations and control regimes for precursor materials and improvised explosive device components. Member States are encouraged to actively participate in Programme Global Shield to enhance the security of the global supply chain for explosive precursors and improvised explosive device components. Members are also invited to share data and intelligence for improved risk management and analytics to strengthen their capacities in identifying, preventing and responding to the illicit trade in explosive precursor chemicals and improvised explosive device components. **To address diversion risks for materials that can be used to manufacture improvised explosive devices, States are encouraged:**

- (a) **To set up adequate regulations tackling dual-use chemicals and improvised explosive device components for their effective control;**
- (b) **To conduct rigorous pre-transfer risk assessments, while the private sector should conduct commercial due diligence exercises;**
- (c) **To promote the use of industry-led end-user statements and non-retransfer clauses and provisions for the sale and transfer of certain sensitive material that can be used to manufacture improvised explosive devices to mitigate their diversion;**
- (d) **To monitor trade flows of precursors and commercial explosives;**
- (e) **To promote comprehensive and accessible record-keeping by States and industry stakeholders on product and component transfers and movements;**
- (f) **To provide support to national investigations and industry-led audits of the diversion of improvised explosive device-related material by engaging in accurate tracing to provide detailed and timely information on the supply chain for affected items;**
- (g) **To improve and continue reporting to the United Nations Comtrade database on the transfer of materials that can be used to manufacture improvised explosive devices;**
- (h) **To enhance the security of vulnerable targets, such as mining sites, building sites and sites producing and storing chemical components that can be used to manufacture improvised explosive devices;**
- (i) **To develop and expand outreach and awareness-raising programmes on the dual use of explosive precursor chemicals and other improvised explosive device components, in particular detonators.**