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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 10th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Joyini . . . . . (South Africa)  
*later:* Mr. Woszczek (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Poland)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 46: Assistance in mine action (A/78/259 and A/C.4/78/L.6)**

1. **Mr. Zouev**, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peace Operations), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/78/259), said that, in 2022, there had been 9,198 casualties caused by explosive ordnance, including mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. Civilians continued to be the most affected, accounting for almost 75 per cent of all casualties. Explosive ordnance from past conflicts continued to cause casualties and serious economic impacts. In addition, parties to recent and ongoing conflicts in populated areas were employing landmines, improvised explosive devices and cluster munitions, which produced immediate and long-lasting consequences. The use of such explosive weapons damaged not only residential structures, but also water and energy infrastructure, hospitals and schools. It also led to complex clearance challenges.

2. In A New Agenda for Peace (see A/77/CRP.1/Add.8), the Secretary-General called on Member States to commit to reducing the human cost of weapons and to the universalization of treaties related to mine action. He also called for the implementation of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Without a dramatic reduction in conflict, violence and the spread of weapons, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would remain out of reach for many people. For example, explosive ordnance contamination hindered access to agricultural areas in Ukraine, damaged arable land in South Sudan and prevented adequate irrigation in Yemen. Extreme weather events and climate shocks – such as the recent serious flooding in Derna, Libya, which had shifted landmines and other explosive ordnance left by years of conflict, thus placing displaced persons in added danger – should also be factored into sustainable development plans and mine action operations.

3. United Nations mine action programmes continued to operate in settings characterized by the use of improvised explosive devices, which exploited ever-changing technology, making it harder to detect devices and prevent harm. Their use restricted the mobility of humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers, resulted in difficulties in delivering aid, and increasingly led to mass civilian casualties and danger to lives and

livelihoods. In 2022, the use of such devices had increased in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia. In such contexts, it was essential to maintain national mine action capacity-building and risk education efforts, including through the work of United Nations country teams, to address civilian protection and residual contamination.

4. The Mine Action Service continued to make a difference in some of the most challenging circumstances. In 2022, the United Nations had enabled the clearance and release of 163 km<sup>2</sup> of previously contaminated land, and in-person explosive ordnance risk education had reached over 5.5 million people. The Organization had supported referral pathways in 14 countries and territories, which connected explosive ordnance victims to services provided by the State or other partners. In some cases, it had provided direct assistance. In addition, 21 countries and territories supported by the United Nations had adopted national mine action standards. The Organization remained committed to working in partnership with Member States, regional organizations and civil society in an effective, cost-efficient, transparent and accountable manner to support mine action.

5. **Mr. Larsen** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the three delegations welcomed the developments in mine action in 2022, including the marking of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), the increase in the number of States that had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the appointment of the first United Nations Global Advocate for persons with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations and the adoption of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. The delegations also welcomed the increase in the number of women working in United Nations mine action programmes, while acknowledging that more work was needed to reach gender parity.

6. Despite the progress made, explosive ordnance continued to endanger the lives of civilians and restrict their safe movement and the enjoyment of their human rights. Extreme weather events and climate change had created new challenges that hampered the protection of civilians from explosive ordnance threats. In Ukraine, vast mined areas were considered unsafe for agricultural use, which exacerbated the harmful impacts of explosive ordnance on food security. Australia, Canada and New Zealand encouraged the international community to take

a holistic approach to peace and security, development and humanitarian assistance, and reiterated their commitment to secure a future free of explosive hazards.

*Mr. Woszczek (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

7. **Mr. Jeranukosol** (Thailand) said that landmines and explosive remnants of war continued to pose a threat to the safety and well-being of communities worldwide. His delegation was alarmed that explosive ordnance had caused more than one casualty every hour, according to the report of the Secretary-General. The international community had a collective responsibility to ensure that mine action received the necessary support. In addition, States should renew their commitment to achieve a mine-free world, in particular by supporting mine clearance and the destruction of stockpiles. His Government encouraged Member States to become parties to the Ottawa Convention and to promote knowledge-sharing and technology transfer to support efforts at the national level. Sufficient resources should also be secured for the Mine Action Service and relevant peace operations to support mine clearance and address its associated humanitarian risks. Thailand was in the final stage of mine clearance, with less than 1 per cent of mine-contaminated areas left to be cleared, and was dedicated to becoming mine free by 2026.

8. Mine risk education must continue to be the cornerstone of a preventive approach to mine action. His delegation was pleased to note that the Secretary-General had emphasized the need for context-appropriate explosive ordnance risk education in his report and that the number of people receiving in-person risk education in 2022 had doubled. In that regard, the Thailand Mine Action Centre had worked closely with local communities to raise awareness and prevent casualties from mines and explosive ordnance. His Government also supported the work of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Mine Action Centre to raise awareness and cooperation at the regional level. Victim assistance should be responsive, inclusive, non-discriminatory, gender balanced and respectful of victims' rights. In Thailand, assistance for mine victims was integrated into the broader legal framework, and the country's universal health coverage provided affordable access to health care, rehabilitation and prosthetics, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

9. Sustainable peace must be anchored in sustainable development and human security. International assistance in mine action was therefore not simply a moral and humanitarian imperative; it was also an endeavour to support the long-term safety and livelihood of peoples.

10. **Mr. Shatil** (Bangladesh) said that, despite the progress made in addressing the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, contamination by explosive ordnance had continued to endanger the lives of civilians, hindering access to services and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The high number of civilian casualties of explosive remnants of war, mines and improvised explosive devices in 2022, gave cause for concern. In the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, special focus should be placed on the victims of explosive ordnance, as they were at risk of being left behind in development and humanitarian fields.

11. Particularly in connection with the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, his delegation commended efforts to encourage the universalization of legal instruments related to mine action and underscored the importance of integrating mine action into initiatives regarding humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and peace and security. Technical assistance and capacity-building support for mine action should be provided to national authorities, with a view to assisting States in developing and implementing national strategies, policies and legislation to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities.

12. Peacekeeping missions played a vital role in protecting civilians, managing weapons and ammunition and providing technical assistance to national authorities. His delegation therefore echoed the appeal of the Secretary-General to support peace operations deployed in high-threat environments, including through the provision of equipment and bilateral training in line with United Nations standards, with a view to guaranteeing the safety and security of peacekeepers. Sustainable peace could not be achieved without effectively addressing the social and economic consequences of mines on civilian populations. It was therefore essential to integrate mine action in peacebuilding priorities, enhance the delivery of explosive ordnance risk education and share information on contamination with the humanitarian responders assisting communities. Despite the improvements to gender parity in United Nations mine action programmes in 2022, an overall lack of gender parity in technical mine action positions persisted. Additional efforts were needed to reach more women, and a variety of activities should be explored.

13. **Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka) said that nearly 70 countries and territories continued to grapple with the presence of landmines. Those barbaric weapons killed and maimed innocent people, particularly children, long after conflicts had ended. The international community must therefore raise awareness, foster collective action and exchange valuable experiences to address the

pressing global issues arising from landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. It must also adapt to the changing realities of conflict, which made it more difficult to address the problem of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Solutions would require political will, resources and collaboration among stakeholders, including national authorities. There was a need to employ a coordinated approach that combined technical expertise with conflict resolution, improve data quality, guarantee sustainability without creating new risks and integrate the perspectives of affected communities, especially vulnerable groups, through comprehensive and inclusive mine action programmes.

14. Sri Lanka was a party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Convention. Under its national mine action strategy, over 42 km<sup>2</sup> of land had been cleared; however, there was a need for proactive identification and clearance in less populated regions. Although progress had been made in clearing the minefields laid by the Sri Lankan Army, significant challenges persisted in clearing those laid by non-State actors in remote jungle areas. In 2022, a non-technical survey had identified 8.8 km<sup>2</sup> of previously unknown mined areas. As Sri Lanka neared the conclusion of its clearance operations, the Government was actively planning for the management of residual contamination, under which the Army would maintain and update the information management system for mine action. In addition, efforts had been made to increase the representation of women in national mine action programmes, and two all-women demining teams had become operational in 2022.

15. Demining technology research tended to focus on new innovations taking the place of traditional tools. However, neither new nor conventional tools could reach the benchmark of 100 per cent detection. Rigorous scientific testing was therefore essential to evaluate demining tools, and researchers were urged to focus on refining risk analysis. The fear of the presence of landmines prevented the cultivation of fields, placing yet another obstacle on the road to reconstruction and development. In that connection, his delegation advocated the use of machine learning to automate demining, as its versatility in detecting various explosive devices made it suitable for several contexts.

16. **Ms. Al-mashehari** (Yemen) said that, although her country had eliminated all its stockpiles of mines since acceding to the Ottawa Convention, Houthi militias had planted more than 2 million mines throughout Yemen, leading to thousands of deaths and injuries. There was no justification for planting anti-personnel mines in populated areas which had no

connection with military action. Mines and other unexploded ordnance had significant social and economic consequences for Yemenis in both urban and rural areas. They threatened the lives of children, who had been deprived of health, education and other human rights, and many rural women had lost their livelihood owing to contamination of their farms and pastoral lands. Such weapons also hindered development and threatened maritime traffic.

17. As a result of climate change, seasonal floods in Yemen had caused mines to migrate, thereby increasing the harm to civilians. The national army and Project Masam were undertaking significant demining efforts. However, the random dispersal of mines made their clearance all the more difficult. The international community should press the Houthi militias and the Iranian regime to comply with international law and resolutions, cease planting mines and explosive devices and provide the Yemeni Government with maps of the locations of all mines planted thus far. It would also be useful for the international community to provide demining training and equipment to the Yemeni Government. Such support was essential to the work of a number of mine action teams. Her Government thanked all the States and non-governmental organizations that supported its efforts to overcome the humanitarian catastrophe affecting her country.

18. **Ms. Samson** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and, in addition, Andorra, Georgia, Iceland, Monaco and San Marino, said that the European Union was united in its commitment to achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines, and all of its member States were States parties to the Ottawa Convention. It would continue to support humanitarian mine action around the world, including in the face of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

19. The draft resolution, facilitated by Poland on behalf of the European Union, included new language that encouraged relevant bodies to include mine action in their climate and food security programmes and recognized that mines were an impediment to land cultivation, local resilience and peacebuilding. Member States had also agreed to note the role of mine action in reducing the human cost of weapons and the need to include mine action in discussions about A New Agenda for Peace. The European Union was pleased to note the appointment of the United Nations Global Advocate for persons with disabilities in conflict and peacebuilding situations. In that connection, the draft resolution

included language on the incorporation of a disability-inclusive perspective in mine action programmes, as well as support for victims and survivors to gain access to mental health and psychosocial support services. It was hoped that the additional points discussed during the consultations could be reflected in future draft resolutions, including language on the way in which mines and explosive remnants of war affected the enjoyment of human rights and concerns about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

20. The European Union thanked the delegation of Poland for its leadership in facilitating the discussions on the draft resolution and in reaching consensus on the issue. It called on all Member States to maintain their commitment to promote respect for international humanitarian law and to comply with their international mine action obligations.

21. **Mr. Szczerski** (Poland) said that his delegation welcomed the strong commitment from the international community to combat the problem of mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, which continued to cause the deaths of innocent people long after conflicts had ended and affected the most vulnerable individuals, including children, young people and internally displaced persons. Poland supported all efforts undertaken by mine-affected States parties to fulfil their time-bound commitments under the Ottawa Convention.

22. His delegation commended the United Nations for taking a leading role in fostering global efforts in mine action and emphasized the crucial role of humanitarian demining in post-conflict and reconstruction contexts to pave the way for social and economic recovery. A significant number of dangerous explosives had been planted in Poland during the Second World War and continued to pose a threat to civilians. In 2022, the Polish Armed Forces had organized lessons for students on the risk and effects of explosive remnants of war, thousands of which had been destroyed. His delegation was pleased to note that the report of the Secretary-General included information on the situation in Ukraine and highlighted the link between assistance in mine action and current pressing challenges, such as food security and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

23. Poland had consistently made voluntary contributions to the Mine Action Service and had a proven track record in demining around the world. Its current efforts focused on Ukraine, where explosive ordnance contamination had reached an unprecedented scale following the aggression by the Russian Federation, making it one of the most mine-

contaminated countries in the world. Russian mines had also multiplied threats to global food security, having contaminated significant amounts of agricultural land. In 2022 and 2023, Poland had provided assistance to Ukraine in the form of medical evacuation of patients, many of whom had been victims of mines; the deployment of demining units; the provision of training programmes; and the transfer of advanced mine detectors. It had also contributed \$400,000 to joint programmes of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations that focused on clearing mines from agricultural fields in Ukraine.

24. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that his Government had made significant progress in demining efforts in recent years and welcomed the assistance of international organizations in its endeavours. It had been working closely with the Mine Action Service to clear minefields in conflict areas. As a result, some eastern states had been declared mine free. In 2021, operations to clear explosive remnants of war had cleared several hazardous areas in the Darfur states, thereby improving the movement of internally displaced persons and returnees. The signing of the peace agreement with armed factions in 2020 had further assisted in mine clearance.

25. The National Mine Action Centre had partnered with national and international organizations to provide mine risk education to local communities, and related programmes had been integrated into school curricula in affected states. The Centre had also organized a workshop to update the victims' assistance strategy, during which international experts had recommended that participation of mine victims be increased and that efforts be aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Government also worked to ensure the full and equitable participation and integration of mine victims in society while respecting human rights and gender equality.

26. Despite the progress achieved, some challenges remained, including a lack of sufficient funding, the uncontrolled movement of some groups, the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and related response efforts, persistent insecurity in some areas and outdated tools in need of maintenance or replacement. In addition, operations had been hindered by difficult terrain and heavy rainfall.

27. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war negatively affected the humanitarian situation and sustainable development of civilian populations. In the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries in the

region, contaminated areas continued to threaten the safety and well-being of innocent residents. His Government commended the efforts of the Mine Action Service undertaken in the region and expressed its readiness to engage actively in relevant programmes and share its experience and knowledge regarding mine action, clearance and risk education.

28. His delegation requested that the Secretariat examine the implications of the deficiencies, exclusions and limitations experienced by the people and Governments of affected territories when preparing the biannual report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action. It also stressed that States were legally and morally responsible for the landmines and other explosive devices that they laid in other countries and should shoulder the responsibility of providing the necessary assistance and support. Lastly, his delegation emphasized the importance of considering the negative effects of any illegal and harmful impediments and restrictions, including unilateral coercive measures, that affected access to mine-clearing supplies and equipment, the transfer of technology or financial resources, in accordance with humanitarian principles and national mine action strategies and plans.

29. **Mr. Al-Saed** (Iraq) said that many countries were suffering from the consequences of mines and other explosive ordnance used during conflicts and wars. The lack of maps made demining very difficult, and the costs were extremely high. His Government was committed to the Ottawa Convention and granted access to all organizations that provided support for the decontamination and demining of Iraq. In that regard, it was grateful for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the Mine Action Service and other United Nations entities.

30. Over 6,415 km<sup>2</sup> of land was contaminated by mines, including 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> considered extremely dangerous owing to the presence of explosives in populated areas. Under its national plan, the Government had taken action to demine 492 km<sup>2</sup>. The contaminated areas were used for various activities, including farming, and many mine incidents occurred in areas of the country liberated from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In addition to the damage caused by mines and other explosive ordnance, individuals and their families suffered significant psychological and physical effects. The Government was therefore making significant efforts to rehabilitate survivors and reintegrate them into society. Mines and other explosive ordnance were also a major obstacle to development in terms of the economy, agriculture, tourism, trade, infrastructure and other sectors. They impeded urban

development, service delivery, reconstruction efforts, free movement and the return of refugees.

31. The Government was working to establish national mechanisms and strategies in partnership with relevant ministries to bolster demining efforts and pass relevant legislation. Significant efforts have been made to raise awareness of the dangers of mines, in particular through local media. The Government was also strengthening capacities to provide victims with medical care, including prosthetics. The coordination and support of various specialized agencies was needed to provide reintegration services for mine victims. Iraq therefore called on the international community and donors to continue to support demining efforts in the country and the creation of safe environments for all its people.

32. **Mr. Luemba** (Angola) said that mines continued to pose immense danger to human life and impede development in many countries. Achieving a mine-free world required a stronger commitment from Member States to adopt concrete measures and implement legal instruments. Despite global initiatives and consistent international appeals to end the production of mines, they continued to be employed in armed conflicts. His country's experience had proven that the demining process could be much more expensive than their production.

33. With over 70 million square metres of land still to be demined, Angola struggled to rid its territory of landmines 21 years after its internal conflict had ended. The demining process was costly and required well-trained human resources and modern equipment. With the support of international partners, his Government was implementing a comprehensive demining programme, in an effort to rid the country of landmines by 2025. However, the country's gross domestic product had been affected by the oil market crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected its ability to meet its demining obligations.

34. Mine victims, who suffered from physical and mental disabilities, deserved greater attention and sustained support. His Government was engaging in national campaigns aimed at increasing the public's awareness of the risks posed by explosive devices, including by identifying affected areas to prevent further accidents. It had also established a national agency for mine action, a hospital specializing in the production of prosthetics for mine victims and a mental health centre.

35. **Mr. Ono** (Japan) said that, despite significant progress, landmines continued to threaten local populations and impede human security. Progress was hindered by new challenges, such as the migration of

mines as a result of extreme weather events and the rapid increase in the number of casualties caused by improvised explosive devices. His Government had long prioritized mine action support for clearance activities and for victims of landmines and other unexploded ordnance. In 2022, Japan had contributed over \$52 million to assist 22 countries, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Mine Action Service and other international and non-governmental organizations. It also promoted regional, triangular and South-South cooperation. In 2023, Japan and Cambodia had partnered to support landmine clearance in Ukraine, taking advantage of the expertise of Cambodia to conduct mine action training.

36. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that her delegation expressed concern about the worsening contamination from cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines, which posed a constant and growing threat to civilian populations, humanitarian actors and United Nations peacekeepers. Her Government called on all Member States to adhere to the relevant treaties and comply fully with their obligations under international law and the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Given the rise in conflicts and mine contamination, the United Nations must provide greater assistance in mine action, including by facilitating access to services for victims, strengthening the resilience of communities and supporting capacity-building for national and local authorities. In that connection, her delegation highlighted the advisory services of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

37. The safety and security of peacekeepers must be improved by enhancing the preparedness of personnel, especially those deploying to high-threat environments. The inclusion of a gender perspective in mine action was also essential. Her delegation was pleased to note the increase in the number of women who had received risk education and the number of countries and territories that had developed a gender strategy for mine action. The international community must continue to work towards gender parity in United Nations mine action programmes and ensure that women were represented in training and capacity-development opportunities.

38. In order to meet the long-term needs of the people, families and communities that had suffered from the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, her Government continued to provide support in the form of pensions, medical care, psychosocial support, integration, land transfers, access to credit and other services. Lastly, her delegation paid tribute to all the

people who had lost their lives working for peace and expressed its thanks to those who dedicated themselves to ridding the world of the threat of explosive ordnance.

39. **Ms. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government attached great importance to the issue of mines, which had been employed by terrorist organizations in her country. Demining activities were crucial to guarantee a safe environment for citizens and contributed to the safe return of Syrian refugees. The Syrian Arab Army was working to decontaminate mined areas. Despite the loss of life to its soldiers and its limited resources, the Army had removed over 50,000 units of explosive ordnance and 84,000 units of other unexploded ordnance and 45,000 mines. It had also cleared mines and explosive ordnance from over 7,350,000 m<sup>2</sup> of its territory.

40. In 2022, the recently created national demining committee had met to establish the technical norms governing demining efforts in the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with international standards for mine action. In 2018, the Syrian Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mine Action Service, with a view to saving the lives of Syrian citizens, combating the effects of mines placed in areas previously controlled by terrorist groups, raising awareness among citizens and providing assistance to mine victims.

41. Given the scale of mine-contaminated areas, her Government stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation and coordination and allocating the necessary resources. Mine action was a humanitarian issue that should not be politicized by imposing unilateral restrictions on the transfer of demining equipment, technology or financial resources to affected countries. Her delegation commended the United Nations for its efforts to assist the Syrian Government in mine action, carried out in collaboration with local partners and friendly countries. It was crucial to move from awareness-raising to practical demining in order to neutralize the remaining explosive remnants of war in liberated zones. Despite the lack of financing, her Government looked forward to continued coordination with all other States, especially with regard to the exchange of experiences and technical assistance in mine action.

42. **Mr. Zlenko** (Ukraine) said that his delegation welcomed the inclusion of new language in the draft resolution, including the call to incorporate mine action in food security programmes and the recognition of the impact of mines on land cultivation. Mines and explosive remnants of war continued to pose grave humanitarian risks to local civilian populations and to

personnel participating in humanitarian peacekeeping, reconstruction and mine clearance operations in affected countries.

43. Owing to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, his country had become one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world, with 30 per cent of its territory affected. Russian forces had mined roads, farmland, schools, hospitals and residential buildings, and nearly 250 people had been killed and approximately 500 injured. Ukrainian farmers had been severely affected by the catastrophic scale of contamination of agricultural land, affecting 470,000 ha. According to World Bank estimates, the cost of the full range of humanitarian demining work would total more than \$37 billion.

44. His Government was working with international partners to develop a mine action strategy, with a view to returning land to productive use, preventing accidents and protecting victims. It expressed its appreciation to the United Nations, in particular for the provision of specialized capacity-building training sessions and protective equipment, and to the donor countries that had supported the State's humanitarian demining efforts since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression.

45. **Mr. Souliyong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government appreciated the assistance it received from United Nations entities and international organizations to strengthen its national capacities in mine action, which had significantly mitigated the humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war. Despite the tremendous efforts made, more needed to be done. The remnants of cluster munitions dropped on his country over 40 years earlier continued to pose significant threats to civilians, primarily women, children and farmers in rural areas. An estimated 80 million sub-munitions remained unexploded, covering one third of the country's territory. The mission to clear unexploded ordnance was therefore more than an economic necessity; it was a moral obligation.

46. Recent clearance efforts had facilitated development projects, including for transport infrastructure, such as the country's first high-speed railway. In order to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and guarantee the safety and well-being of communities, the Government had adopted a national goal to save lives from unexploded ordnance, with a focus on reducing the number of casualties to the greatest extent possible, meeting the needs of all survivors and releasing safe farmland. His Government was also grateful for the support it had received from Member States and international non-governmental

organizations to clear unexploded ordnance and provide assistance to victims. It called upon the international community to strengthen cooperation and assistance and to mobilize sufficient resources to help those countries and peoples most affected by explosive remnants of war.

47. **Ms. Rambøll** (Norway) said that, in the face of rising global tensions, the international community must act to preserve humanitarian disarmament conventions and established norms, which were being severely challenged. Such international instruments had successfully demonstrated that disarmament diplomacy could reduce human suffering. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, instability and economic downturns, clearance operations had made significant gains in the past four years. Nevertheless, her delegation expressed concern about the new use of anti-personnel mines, in particular in Ukrainian territory, and the increasing use of improvised explosive devices, which resulted in a high number of civilian casualties and must be addressed within the Ottawa Convention.

48. Only a handful of the 30 States parties to the Convention with reported or suspected mine contamination were in a position to meet their clearance deadlines, primarily owing to reduced funding for mine action globally. Her delegation therefore urged States parties to contribute national funds to mine action as a demonstration of national ownership, which was essential to support successful mine clearance and to secure donor funding. In order to ensure that limited resources were used effectively, States should also implement international mine action standards, including with regard to mapping and land release.

49. Her Government's humanitarian policy was guided by the protection of civilians, and its priorities included mine clearance, risk education and the universalization of the Ottawa Convention and its norms. An inclusive approach that took into account gender and diversity was essential to achieve the best results for mine action.

50. **Mr. Wang Zhenjiang** (China) said that the United Nations had made tremendous efforts to support global mine action, resulting in fewer mine hazards in a number of countries; however, several factors had further aggravated the landmine situation in others. Relying on his country's past experience, the Government of China had consistently advocated three guiding principles for mine action: full consideration of the national conditions and requirements of affected countries, an emphasis on capacity-building to support a transition to self-reliance and a focus on improving the effectiveness of assistance and cooperation.



51. China had fulfilled its obligations under the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996 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. Under its long-term plan for mine action assistance, China provided financial and in-kind support, training sessions, field guidance and other assistance. In 2023, it had provided approximately 30 million yuan to affected countries to fund demining equipment and humanitarian supplies and had trained 40 demining technical personnel. China had continued to support ASEAN in strengthening regional cooperation in mine action. Under a joint mine-clearing operation organized with Cambodia, demining personnel from 14 countries had cleared over 3,000 units of unexploded ordnance of various types. In addition, the ASEAN standard operating procedures for mine clearance and other relevant documents had been revised. His Government would continue to further strengthen cooperation and promote exchanges so as to contribute to solving the humanitarian problems arising from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

52. **Mr. Ondo** (Cameroon) said that his delegation welcomed the progress made over the past two decades in destroying stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and reducing the number of victims. It was pleased to note the establishment of coordination and rapid response mechanisms to address the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war. Nevertheless, those weapons continued to kill and maim indiscriminately years after conflicts had ended, thereby jeopardizing peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Urgent measures were needed to address improvised explosive devices, which were the primary cause of the increasing number of victims in conflict and post-conflict settings.

53. Having been exposed to mines and other improvised explosive devices in its fight against Boko Haram and other asymmetric threats on its territory, Cameroon recognized the need for international cooperation and assistance in order to eliminate such weapons and tackle the humanitarian repercussions of their use. The success of mine action carried out by the United Nations depended greatly on the mobilization of resources, since most activities were financed by voluntary contributions. It was therefore imperative to ensure that awareness-raising efforts and resource mobilization continued without interruption. To that end, his delegation called on donor countries to provide substantial and increased support for mine action in countries emerging from conflict.

54. His Government reiterated its thanks to its bilateral and multilateral partners for their firm commitment to mine action and called for stronger solidarity. Priority should be given to technological support in order to promote the design of mine action techniques and tools that were easy to use, effective, sustainable and appropriate, as well as to improve capacities to clear mines and contamination from explosive remnants of war.

55. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that the increase in contamination from landmines and unexploded ordnance in Myanmar posed a danger to the security, safety and well-being of civilians. Since the illegal military coup in February 2021, the junta had procured arms and raw materials worth over \$1 billion to fuel its inhumane actions against civilians, including air strikes, brutal mass killings during ground operations and the widespread burning of homes and properties. It had increased the deployment of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, with an average of 30 air strikes per month during the first half of 2023, and had used civilians as human shields and minesweepers. Those atrocities had been facilitated by arms transfers from certain countries despite international appeals and the outcry from the people of Myanmar.

56. An immediate international intervention was needed to tackle the worsening humanitarian catastrophe. His delegation urged the international community to offer flexible, direct funding to local humanitarian organizations and to support the civilian Government, which had been collaborating closely with ethnic resistance organizations and civil society organizations in Myanmar to deliver humanitarian aid to victims and internally displaced persons. His delegation thanked the United Nations Children's Fund for its engagement in delivering explosive ordnance risk education. It also appealed to the international community to take decisive action to put an end to the atrocities committed by the junta against civilians by ending the military dictatorship, restoring democracy and building a federal democratic union.

57. **Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) said that many conflict-affected States required professional demining assistance in order to fully transition towards peace, rebuild infrastructure and the economy, and ensure food security and development. The Russian Federation supported the activities of the Mine Action Service, including with financial contributions, and had participated in Mine Action Service efforts to develop international standards to combat improvised explosive devices. It had also sponsored the work of the Service to clear approximately 2 million square metres of land in Darayya, Rif Dimashq Governorate, to pave the way for

the safe return of Syrian refugees. In addition, Russian military specialists were involved in humanitarian mine action throughout the world. The results of her Government's national efforts were reported every year pursuant to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II.

58. Her Government remained open to cooperation on humanitarian demining efforts. It was fostering the exchange of experiences with military demining personnel in a number of Asian countries and working with partners to build technical and operational capacities to guarantee the security of their citizens. Since 2014, the Russian Ministry of Defence had been hosting international demining conferences and conducting exchanges of military-technical information and expertise on explosive remnants of war. Interested States and relevant organizations were invited to participate.

59. **Mr. Abaalala** (Saudi Arabia) said that, in order to ensure the safety of peoples living in areas affected by mines and remnants of war in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda, his delegation would like to see references to mine clearance included in ceasefire and post-conflict agreements. Since the launch of Project Masam in June 2018, its mine clearance efforts in several governorates of Yemen had faced challenges, including the lack of maps and the arbitrary planting of mines around houses of worship and in farms and pastoral lands. In 2023, the Project had cleared more than 2,900 units of unexploded ordnance across 18,677 m<sup>2</sup> of territory. Since the Project's outset, 33 members had been killed while saving the Yemeni people from the scourge of mines. Furthermore, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had funded the medical care of several victims, the majority of whom were women and children, at hospitals in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. His delegation reiterated that the international community had a responsibility to support mine clearance and reminded those that had planted mines to contribute to their clearance and provide maps of minefields.

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60. **Mr. Szczerski** (Poland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and introducing the draft resolution, said that the primary goal of the draft resolution was to express support for the mine action efforts carried out by Member States, the United Nations community and other organizations. The language of the resolution had been strengthened, particularly with regard to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. References had been added about the impact of

explosive ordnance contamination on land cultivation and local resilience, and the crucial role of mine action in reducing the human cost of weapons.

61. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

62. **Ms. Ukabiala** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Iceland, Iraq, Japan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Palau, Senegal, Ukraine and the United States of America had joined the sponsors.

63. *Draft resolution A/C.4/78/L.6 was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*