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Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.03 a.m.

Agenda item 51: Assistance in mine action (A/70/207 and A/C.4/70/L.8)

1. **The Chair** recalled that the Committee had last considered the item on assistance in mine action at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which had adopted resolution 68/72 in consequence.

2. **Mr. Titov** (Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions) said that the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/70/207) highlighted United Nations efforts towards a mine-free world, while warning of grave and increasing mine use and contamination. Landmines and other explosive hazards remained a major security issue affecting civilian populations, United Nations operations and global peace and security. Worldwide, 7.9 million people still lived in or near areas affected by mines and/or explosive remnants of war (ERW). A worrying feature of current conflicts was the devastating use of conventional explosive weapons in populated areas. In his report, the Secretary-General had called on parties to conflict to stop using weapons with wide-area effects and had urged Member States to support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to collect examples of good practice and develop guidance in that area. Furthermore, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were increasingly common, and undetonated ones added to the explosive hazards threatening civilians and impeding peacebuilding and recovery. In Afghanistan, IEDs caused more casualties than landmines.

3. For the 2015 International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the “More than Mines” theme had highlighted the growing range of such hazards and the need for flexible and holistic responses incorporating victim assistance and advocacy, as well as the clearance of all explosive hazards.

4. Mine action was at the core of the United Nations post-conflict humanitarian response, with a growing number of requests for such assistance. The Secretary-General’s report provided examples of rapid response in Gaza, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) spearheaded immediate United Nations action and

multi-agency efforts to deal with the changing situation on the ground.

5. The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 had been developed by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, and included a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to measure progress; its implementation had increased accountability and transparency to an impressive extent. Member States had worked closely with the United Nations system to achieve greater compliance with relevant international legal instruments, thereby affording those States an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to a world free from landmines and other explosive hazards. Some 162 countries, including, most recently, Oman, had acceded to or ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, or Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and the Secretariat believed progress was possible towards the universalization of that important document. He welcomed the Maputo Action Plan 2014-2019 adopted at the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention held in June 2014.

6. It was the view of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations that the use of cluster munitions was a direct violation of the basic rules of international humanitarian law governing the conduct of hostilities. There were 93 States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including Albania, Grenada, Mauritania, Norway and Zambia (all of which had achieved clearance in the previous two years). 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, or Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, had been ratified or acceded to by 121 States, including most recently Algeria, Grenada, Iraq, Kuwait, the State of Palestine and Zambia.

7. Some 156 countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and 86 countries had ratified its protocols. Furthermore, almost a third of countries with a United Nations presence had established a disability policy or plan for survivors and victims. Despite such critical commitments to international and national leadership, their implementation remained a challenge. That was a

key area of partnership for the United Nations and Member States.

8. He was pleased to report that the number of people killed or injured by landmines had declined by two thirds since its peak in 2005. Mozambique had recently announced the removal of all known landmines from its territory, thus demonstrating what could be achieved thanks to national resolve, United Nations donors and civil society. Other achievements included an 85 per cent reduction in mine casualties in the Lao People's Democratic Republic since the previous decade; 1,631 minefields cleared in Afghanistan despite challenging conditions on the ground; 2,000 kilometres of road surveyed for contamination in South Sudan; and 50 square kilometres of land in Cambodia released through survey.

9. At the request of States, the United Nations provided support for improving security and avoiding accidental explosions at government-owned ammunition storage areas. More than 80 tonnes of unsecured ammunition had been safely relocated in the Central African Republic, 1,500 tonnes of unsafe items were destroyed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and considerable efforts were under way in Mali.

10. Targeted risk education provided women, girls, boys and men with life-saving information, reducing their risk of being killed or injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, including IEDs. Over the previous two years, the United Nations had delivered such education in 18 countries and Territories.

11. It was essential for the United Nations to make headway in translating plans into action in victim support. Afghanistan had some of the highest survivor numbers, with the Government estimating the number at 250,000. In the past two years, 20,000 people had been provided with physical rehabilitation services and vocational training through the United Nations and its partners. National capacity building had been strengthened, with three United Nations advisers embedded in ministries to work on victims' assistance, including mainstreaming of disability legislation.

12. Accelerating the transfer of mine action functions to national actors was a crucial objective of the United Nations mine action strategy. Among countries under the monitoring and evaluation mechanism, 59 per cent had developed relevant national strategies and budgets,

with 61 per cent of those having begun plans for the transition to national ownership. For instance, the State authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina handled all mine action planning and operations, with the United Nations providing only advice and emergency support upon request.

13. South-South cooperation was also an important tool to speed up the transfer of responsibility to national authorities. He was pleased that the Secretary-General's report had highlighted a number of recent relevant exchanges involving Benin, Jordan, Mali and Tajikistan.

14. The United Nations aimed to integrate mine action into multilateral instruments and national legislation. Recent regional achievements had included the African Union Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework in partnership with the United Nations.

15. On the 15th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on gender, he stressed the importance of women in peacebuilding. Over 90 per cent of United Nations programmes assembled survey teams of men and women, while several programmes, (in such places as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Lebanon, had women working as deminers. That was a testament to women's equal and full participation as active providers of peace and security in a way that showed bravery and sacrifice under difficult circumstances.

16. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of maintaining momentum towards the United Nations goal of eliminating the threat of mines and other explosive hazards. He thanked delegates for their support, and called on them to explain to finance ministers and parliaments that investing in mine action yielded political and financial returns. It was the least that could be done for the future development of those living in fear and for the colleagues dedicating their lives to protecting others.

17. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked what kind of technical, rather than financial, assistance UNMAS could provide to Member States. His Government also wanted to know whether UNMAS had the capacity to meet demands of countries in need. If not, he asked what Member States could do to promote and upgrade the capacity of UNMAS to meet those demands.

18. **Mr. Titov** (Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions) said he would ask the UNMAS Director to explain in full. The Service was involved in knowledge transfer, surveys, reconnaissance, supervising operations, assisting national authorities with a United Nations presence on the ground, participation in demining, linking up with donors, and the transfer of technology, and was carrying out those activities with a small team in New York supplemented by hundreds of international staff and thousands of people working in the field. Currently, there was no potential to expand capacity, and he called on Member States to provide their vision, support and advocacy in the Fifth Committee, as the needs were huge and real. Mine action had been a flagship activity of the United Nations for years, and he looked forward to partnering with countries in all those areas.

19. **Ms. Marcaillou** (Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)) said that UNMAS provided provide technical support, assistance, advice, training and equipment. Support involved channelling the right expertise and inviting Member States that were in a position to help to deploy experts on ground. The Service had the unique capacity to make use of equipment and transfer knowledge and expertise; requests to participate in meetings had to be considered selectively due to staffing and funding issues. Major operations were supported by a small team in New York. Peacekeeping was part of the work of the United Nations, but support was needed for the humanitarian work of UNMAS, such as mine clearance, surveys, training and victim assistance. She called on those countries able to contribute to provide funding to help UNMAS meet growing demand and enhance its strong partnerships with countries.

20. **Mr. Avramović** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union was united in its collective commitment to the goal of a world free of the threat of anti-personnel mines. All 28 Members were State Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and all European Union States had co-sponsored the

resolution of the General Assembly on assistance in mine action.

21. In 2014, the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Maputo had discussed the remaining challenges on mine action and reaffirmed a shared commitment to end the suffering caused by antipersonnel mines. The European Union would continue to support politically and financially the efforts of the international community towards that goal.

22. The European Union had contributed almost 600 million euros since 1999, over one-third of the world's financial assistance to mine action, making it the leading donor. Combined assistance from other international actors could increase the impact of the support made available. The international community needed to reinforce partnerships between States, the United Nations, the African Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and relevant non-governmental organizations.

23. He welcomed the draft resolution on assistance in mine action (A/C.4/70/L.8) and called for it to be adopted by consensus. That resolution was vital in reaffirming the normative framework for the humanitarian mine action activities carried out by the United Nations system, with recognition of the coordinating role of UNMAS. His delegation was pleased that the humanitarian dimension of the draft resolution had been strengthened and that the specific needs of refugees and internally displaced persons were taken into account. The European Union also welcomed the recognition of the humanitarian threat of IEDs following conflict, and expressed its appreciation for national, regional and subregional efforts including those of the African Union.

24. **Mr. Plasai** (Thailand) said that mine action could not be viewed as a self-contained programme, but that it was an essential cross-cutting component of the work of the United Nations. His delegation was encouraged by the progress made under the mine action strategy, particularly in terms of risk education and victim assistance; UNMAS deserved special recognition in that context. His delegation called for the implementation of mine action to remain guided by a comprehensive person-centred approach.

25. Given the increasing risk of explosive hazards to civilians in populated areas, mine action had become necessary during conflicts rather than just as a post-

conflict task. Thailand therefore called on all Member States involved in armed conflicts to refrain from deploying explosive weapons in populated areas. His delegation also supported inclusion of mine action service in the mandate of peacekeeping missions.

26. As one of the first countries to ratify the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1999, Thailand remained committed to the goal of a zero-victim and mine-free country. The Thailand Mine Action Center had cleared over 2,100 square kilometres of contaminated land in 15 years, and significant progress had been made with the Land Release technique. His delegation was committed to completing the clearance of the remaining 430 square kilometres of hazardous areas as soon as possible. Thailand would like to thank donors including Japan, Norway, the United States and several non-government organizations for their contributions.

27. In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the country's mine victim support programmes were integrated into the legal framework for persons with disabilities and implemented through a universal health-care coverage scheme. The aim was to create a rights-based society in which mine victims could live with dignity and participate fully, equally and effectively, in accordance with the Maputo Action Plan and the Maputo + 15 Declaration. Thailand looked forward to the updated United Nations policy on victim assistance and welcomed the adoption of the Dubrovnik Action Plan.

28. In an example of effective South-South cooperation, Thailand had recently hosted the Bangkok Symposium on Landmine Victim Assistance: Enhancing a Comprehensive and Sustainable Mine Action. Thailand remained committed to helping the United Nations rid the world of landmines and realize the rights of mine survivors and victims. The draft resolution before the Committee, co-sponsored by Thailand, called on States and relevant organizations to foster national mine-action capacities, and sharing experiences and strengthening partnerships were crucial for the realization of that goal.

29. **Ms. Alvarado Quezada** (Mexico) said that 162 countries had ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and called on the minority of States that had not acceded to that Convention to do so as soon as possible. Mexico welcomed the Maputo Action Plan and the 31 commitments that would guide the United

Nations on mine assistance with victims at the heart of its efforts.

30. Despite impressive progress in reducing the number of victims and destroying mines, her delegation was concerned about the number of victims of accidents caused by ERW; the increase in the proportion of children dying as a result; armed conflicts creating areas infested with ERW, including cluster munitions; the devastating use of conventional weapons in densely populated areas; the growing use of IEDs that threatened the civilian population; and the presence of uncontrolled munitions endangering the civilian population.

31. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of UNMAS to integrate its work into peacekeeping, humanitarian and development missions. It further welcomed the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, and was pleased that the Strategy was based on human rights and victim assistance. Under the Convention, victim assistance encompassed not only medical care but also rehabilitation, psychological support and social and economic inclusion for individuals and their families. It was therefore vital to find synergies between the Convention's provisions on victim assistance and a comprehensive rights-based approach. In that connection, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was highly relevant to victim assistance.

32. **Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) said that his Government was making great efforts to eradicate anti-personnel mines from its territory in accordance with its commitments under the Convention. That had included destroying over 9,200 anti-personnel mines and clearing an area of some 136,000 square metres since 2007. Peru had updated its national demining standards to include new equipment, techniques, technology and personnel. Anti-personnel mines had been eradicated from all national infrastructure such as police headquarters, electricity pylons and prisons, while the ongoing South-South collaboration with Ecuador on humanitarian demining in border areas had been institutionalized with a view to increasing confidence-building measures and transparency.

33. Peru was working on creating a single registry of mine victims, with the latter receiving medical care, physical rehabilitation, and psychological support, in addition to social and economic reintegration

programmes. Besides the considerable resources earmarked by Peru itself for the task, his delegation wished to thank donors for their contributions and called on international cooperation agencies to contribute to the process.

34. **Mr. Mahdi** (Iraq) said that, according to international reports, Iraq was at the top of the list of most heavily mined countries. Pollution from mines and other explosive devices covered large areas, with as much as 90 per cent of agricultural land contaminated, thereby hampering sustainable development, and some 25 million mines and 21,000 victims killed or injured, including entire villages of amputees. His delegation therefore called on the international community to assume its responsibility and help Iraq by demining and by banning such lethal devices. Iraq had been affected by mines for over 50 years due to historical conflicts and current terrorist activity against Iraqi forces. Challenges for decontamination included a lack of data and maps showing the number and location of mines and other explosive devices. The relevant ministries were undertaking non-technical surveys in southern provinces and aimed to extend the activity. Awareness-raising of the dangers involved was also under way among the population, including in schools. His Government was engaged in institutional capacity building, while the rehabilitation of disabled persons injured by such devices involved national and international partners. Large areas had been decontaminated, but vast swaths remained infested. In addition, assistance to victims, and amputees in particular, was insufficient due to weak levels of international assistance to Iraq.

35. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that the removal of mines was a dangerous task that was prohibitively expensive and well beyond the capability of many of the countries affected. He reiterated Egypt's position that States responsible for laying mines also had a responsibility to provide assistance in removing them. In Egypt, vast tracts of land remained unusable due to around 22 million landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Those landmines had caused over 7,000 casualties over the past 25 years, including 3,200 deaths. Furthermore, around 10 per cent of Egypt's total farmable land had been rendered useless by those mines and ERW. Mines also affected those working in peacekeeping operations, including forces contributed

by Egypt. He called on the international community to do more to address the landmine challenge.

36. **Mr. Hall** (New Zealand) said that landmines could hamper efforts to rehabilitate people and to build confidence in a fragile post-conflict environment. The threat of unexploded remnants of war generated fear and prevented people from accessing agricultural land/water, travelling freely to schools and religious centres and re-establishing their livelihoods.

37. In 2015, his Government had provided untagged core funding to UNMAS of one million New Zealand dollars to support its work in removing and destroying mines, risk education, and strengthening national capacity in those areas, along with a further half-million New Zealand dollars to the UNMAS Rapid Response and Technical Support Capacity. In addition, New Zealand provided core funding to other organizations that undertook essential mine action related activities, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ICRC, along with specific projects in Palestine and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

38. As a supporter of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, New Zealand strongly condemned any use of landmines or cluster munitions, and encouraged all those that had not yet joined those two treaties to do so. He commended all mine action workers, who braved dangerous conditions and risked their lives in the pursuit of a world free from such devices.

39. **Mr. Thammavongsa** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government shared the United Nations vision of a world free of threats from the explosive remnants of war, and that international cooperation and assistance was vital for achieving that objective. His delegation commended the United Nations system and the international community for their work in the field of mine action.

40. His country remained one of the world's worst-affected by unexploded ordnance, which in turn affected the development of the country and its inhabitants, particularly in rural areas. His Government and UNDP had established a trust fund in 2010 to mobilize support for the two relevant national institutions. Development partners such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the European Union,

Luxembourg and Belgium had contributed over US\$ 28 million, with the Republic of Korea also a recent contributor.

41. Bilaterally, since 2011 the United States had provided more than US\$ 35 million; Japan had provided more than US\$ 30 million along with technological assistance; and China had provided equipment for victim assistance valued at more than US\$ 600,000. India had provided training for demining personnel. There were around 15 non-profit and civil society operators working in the sector, using over US\$ 56 million, as well as 12 national and international commercial operators that had spent over US\$ 42 million in the past five years. His delegation was extremely grateful to the international community and civil society organizations for their valuable support, and called on the international community to provide even more assistance in addressing the situation.

42. **Mr. Huang Da** (China) said that his Government was a Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its protocols, and as such attached great importance to the humanitarian concerns entailed by landmines and other ERWs. Mass demining campaigns had been carried out in the border areas of Guangxi and Yunnan province to eliminate the threat to civilians. China had fulfilled its obligations on landmine production, use, marking and recording, and continued to destroy, and refrain from exporting, outdated anti-personnel landmines and other explosive ordinance that did not comply with Amended Protocol II to the Convention. His Government had conducted training on the Protocol for military personnel to raise awareness among demining professionals. Research had been carried out on destruction technologies and studies published on demining techniques. China also attached importance to national capacity building and victim assistance, and had contributed personnel and equipment for that purpose.

43. Since 1998, the Chinese Government had provided demining assistance in the form of training and equipment worth around RMB 90 million to over 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In 2015, China hosted demining training courses for Myanmar, and delivered demining assistance worth RMB 3 million to Cambodia and the ASEAN Regional Forum Regional Demining Centre there. It would also be holding a joint training session for Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Zambia during 2015. As

international exchange and cooperation on landmines was always high on China's agenda, his Government had maintained close contact with States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions and had participated in relevant meetings on those Conventions as an observer.

44. As a responsible member of the international community, China was prepared to work closely with all parties to promote the effective implementation of Amended Protocol II to remove the landmines threatening local life and property in the 60 countries still affected by landmines.

45. **Mr. Mialkovskyi** (Ukraine) welcomed the Secretary-General's report, and recognized the key role of UNMAS as the United Nations focal point for a rapid and effective response to emergencies in all aspects of mine action. His delegation was also pleased that a growing number of countries in recent years were fulfilling their international obligations and removing the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) from their territory.

46. However, ongoing conflicts in States including Ukraine were resulting in new ERW contamination. IEDs were increasingly used by illegal armed and terrorist groups and posed a significant threat to communities recovering from conflict. Ukraine recognized the importance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in addressing post-conflict remedial measures in connection with ERW. Having been a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention for over 10 years, Ukraine acknowledged the Convention's importance in minimizing the use, risks and effects of landmines. Despite significant security challenges, Ukraine duly implemented those treaties and would be willing to cooperate further with international partners and share best practices on existing ERW detection and destruction technologies.

47. Russian offensive actions, and those of illegal armed groups sponsored by it, in eastern Ukraine had drastically increased the number of dangerous mines and explosive devices, causing severe casualties among civilians. Approximately 5,900 hectares had been cleared in that area, with the destruction of more than 26,200 explosive devices and mines by the Ukrainian armed forces. Many State institutions in Ukraine were also involved in national mine activity, in particular

humanitarian demining in the liberated Donetsk and Lugansk regions. Ukraine was working closely with UNMAS, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to improve and implement national mine action legislation, relating in particular to the establishment of a National Mine Authority and Mine Action Centre in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

48. While acknowledging that the responsibility for unexploded ordnance rested with the authorities of mine-affected countries, Ukraine also believed that a lack of national resources could require the issue to be considered within a humanitarian and development framework. His delegation was convinced that the United Nations had a role to play, as did the timely mobilization of resources from donors. Ukraine was a co-sponsor of the draft resolution and called for it to be adopted by consensus.

49. **Mr. Doucouré** (Mali) said that it was regrettable that mines and other explosive remnants of war were still threatening civilian populations. Mali was suffering from the actions of various criminal and terrorist groups in the north of the country. Terrorist use of such ordnance had caused 73 deaths and 371 injuries since January 2013. Terrorist groups were using mines as part of asymmetric attacks to derail the international community's dialogue process that had led to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process earlier in 2015. Implementation of that Agreement would include demining activities. Mali had ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1998 and had eliminated its national stockpile of anti-personnel mines that same year. Mali subscribed to the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 and the African Union Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework for 2014-2017. Mali was pleased to be a joint sponsor of the draft resolution at hand.

50. Mali's armed forces were benefiting from training and operational support from bilateral and multilateral partners, and UNMAS support had resulted in the destruction of almost 1,400 explosive remnants of war between 2013 and 2014. Other national institutions were cooperating with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and UNMAS to destroy mines and other explosive remnants of war. Mali also expressed

its condolences for the victims of landmines throughout the world, including peacekeeping personnel.

51. **Ms. Rengifo Vargas** (Colombia) said that her delegation welcomed the fact that the draft resolution was the first to mention IEDs as a humanitarian threat. In Colombia they endangered the population as they were made from common everyday objects. Mentioning such devices in the draft resolution highlighted the need of affected countries for assistance and cooperation, and paved the way for recognition of victims in the armed forces and the civilian population.

52. Colombia was dealing with the humanitarian consequences of conflict with armed non-State actors, resulting in nearly 11,200 mine victims from 1990 to 2015. In March 2015, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC) and the Government had agreed to clear mines to achieve the national objective of fulfilling demining commitments by 2021. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the army's demining squad had begun clearance and decontamination, while humanitarian demining programmes continued to be coordinated by the Directorate for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines (DAICMA). National capacity building was vital, along with continued assistance and cooperation from the international community that were sustainable, planned and coordinated with national authorities in the short and medium term. Colombia reaffirmed its commitment to helping victims overcome their injuries by protecting their rights and preventing any recurrence, as part of lasting and stable peace.

53. Colombia expressed its appreciation for the assistance provided by the United Nations through UNMAS and other agencies and accredited NGOs, as well as thanking all those working on demining on the ground from day to day. Her Government categorically condemned the use of anti-personnel mines, and had therefore destroyed all its anti-personnel mine stockpiles and neutralized all areas that had been mined by its military. A broad commitment from all countries was required to achieve a mine-free world.

54. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that, as a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, his delegation was providing assistance worth about US\$ 622 million to

50 countries and regions in the form of clearance and victim assistance projects. At the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention held in Maputo in 2014, Japan had announced that it would continue to support those countries most heavily affected by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance, promote regional and South-South cooperation, and provide comprehensive support in terms of victim assistance. At the First Review Conference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions held in Dubrovnik in 2015, Japan announced its intention to continue clearance of unexploded ordnance in heavily-affected countries, design and provide support to victim assistance efforts; and provide education on risk reduction.

55. In light of the United Nations' vital role in the global effort to eliminate such hazards, Japan supported mine-action efforts through the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, including UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF. Since 2013, Japan had also been the largest financial contributor to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (UN-VTF) of UNMAS.

56. Japan welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, and was pleased to note progress that many countries had recently made towards fulfilling their obligations to remove the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. His delegation further welcomed the work of the United Nations monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and encouraged the United Nations to continue to take measures to improve coordination, efficiency, transparency and accountability, in particular by implementing the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. It further called on emerging donors to join in the global effort to eliminate the threat of such devastating weapons.

57. As Chair of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG) in 2014, Japan had hosted an emergency meeting on the situation in Gaza for UNMAS, leading to a pledge of US\$ 3 million to the Gaza appeal, and had organized a field visit to Colombia to see the progressing situation on the ground. As Chair of the MASG, Japan thanked Colombia and UNMAS for their assistance with the visit. Four additional Member States had joined MASG during Japan's tenure as Chair.

58. Japan welcomed the attention paid in the current draft resolution to gender equality and women's participation in mine action, the emphasis on South-South cooperation, and the special focus on the humanitarian aspect.

59. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that abandoned landmines and explosive ordnance continued to jeopardize the security and development of Afghanistan and its people. Although significant progress had been achieved in demining activities, Afghanistan remained one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Approximately half a million Afghan civilians lived within 500 metres of landmine-contaminated areas. An average of 33 civilians had been injured or killed each month so far in 2015, with 1,612 communities affected in 258 districts. Over 107 square kilometres of minefields were delaying national infrastructure projects. Explosive remnants of war impeded significant socio-economic development required for basic sustenance in a war-torn economy. More than 80 per cent of contaminated zones were in agricultural areas. Use of IEDs was a common tactic amongst the Taliban and other terrorist groups. In 2014 alone, approximately 3,000 civilians had been injured by IEDs in Afghanistan.

60. The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan had cleared nearly 78.5 per cent of known "legacy" contamination. The remaining 21.5 per cent included 4,363 identifiable hazards covering 557.6 square kilometres. Afghanistan had submitted a request to the States Parties to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention to extend the mine-clearance deadline. All antipersonnel mines would be removed from Afghan territory by 2023 if no further mining took place. His delegation highly appreciated the resolution on assistance in mine action and its reaffirmation of the normative framework for the humanitarian mine action activities carried out by the United Nations. His delegation was also pleased that the resolution continued to support the work of UNMAS, and took note of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for the years 2013-2018.

61. Afghanistan fully supported and appreciated the enormous contribution of the work undertaken by the United Nations and civil society in mine action. His delegation was also grateful for the US\$ 30 million victim assistance project generously funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Afghanistan. Continued support from the

international community was required to help Afghanistan meet the 2023 deadline and provide Afghans with a secure and stable future.

62. **Mr. Elmodir** (Libya) thanked the Secretary-General for his report and UNMAS for its work. As Libya was heavily mined as a result of historical and recent conflicts, his Government attached great importance to international assistance and mine clearing. Such devices caused humanitarian and economic damage, particularly on agricultural land, in many countries including Libya. The country's rapid development since 2011 had compounded the situation in terms of peace and security, while the spread of weapons nationwide had given rise to armed terrorist groups since 2014. Libya needed technical assistance from the United Nations and other countries to create national capacity in mine action. Support for post-conflict countries was essential in the areas of assistance and mine clearing, victim rehabilitation and raising awareness of the dangers. His country also called for continued bilateral cooperation in mine clearing.

63. **Mr. Medan** (Croatia) said that his delegation was concerned by reports of the use of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines in ongoing conflicts, and particularly the civilian impact of IEDs. It was vital to continue calls for the universalization of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Croatia thanked Mozambique for its leadership in the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and welcomed the Maputo Action Plan and Declaration.

64. Devising assistance to victims had to involve the victims themselves, as well as a broader context of development, human rights, disabilities and socio-economic frameworks. It was vital to create links between the two aforementioned Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Croatia stood ready to share expertise with other countries, and viewed as vital the strengthening of bilateral and regional cooperation, as well as collaboration with international organizations and civil society. Croatia commended the role of the United Nations in the field of assistance in mine action, in particular through the implementation of the United Nations Strategy on Mine Action 2013-2018. As joint sponsor of the draft resolution, Croatia called for its adoption by consensus.

65. **Mr. Swan** (Australia) said that his Government was committed to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Since 2010, his Government's Mine Action Strategy had provided over \$A 125 million to reduce the impact of mines, including bilateral programmes in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Laos, Mozambique and Palau, as well as Government funded research in the Solomon Islands. His Government also provided funding to global and regional initiatives that promoted universalization and implementation of the relevant Conventions. Australia was co-coordinator on victim assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as providing funding to the Implementation Support Units of the relevant Conventions.

66. Australia also provided funding to partner organizations such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, UNMAS and the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines and the Cluster Munition Coalition. The Australian Defence Force conducted clearance operations in the southwest Pacific under the auspices of Operation Render Safe. His delegation valued the work of UNMAS, and had donated US\$ 300,000 of core funding in the most recent financial year. Australia called on other States to maintain their levels of funding.

67. **Ms. Ziadé** (Lebanon) said that her delegation recognized the rapid efforts undertaken by UNMAS in the field, in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies. As well as being heavily contaminated, Lebanon was also a good example of partnerships. The Lebanese Armed Forces, in collaboration with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), had cleared approximately several square kilometres of land and destroyed more than 35,000 mines and other unexploded ordnance. More could have been done had Israel provided full data on the landmines and cluster munitions it had used in Lebanon. The Lebanon Mine Action Center continued its partnership with the UNMAS team, and the national Mine Action Strategy (2011-2020) was a three-pronged effort launched in 2011 to achieve a country free of mines by 2020 and to fulfil Lebanon's commitments under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Between 2011 and 2013, as part of that Strategy's first goal, Lebanon had helped communities to better manage risks through regular mine-risk education workshops and training, and the use of information technology and

social media to raise awareness. Secondly, the Ministry of Social Affairs had issued disability cards to all victims of landmines to guarantee them the full enjoyment of their rights. However, the third goal of the Strategy, the total clearance and release of agricultural lands, had been impeded due to a funding shortfall, the non-provision of complete mine maps by Israel, and the discovery of new contaminated areas.

68. The Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon had begun “train the trainer” courses and adopted a curriculum in demining operations. The school would train specialists from the region, as Lebanon had been acting as a Mine Action focal point amongst Arabic-speaking countries. Relevant partnerships with regional and international actors had included the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the French Army.

69. Lebanon had gone a long way towards bringing the threat and impact of mines and explosive remnants of war under control, mainly due to the much-appreciated support of UNMAS, the European Union, UNDP, UNIFIL and the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement of the United States State Department. In that regard, her delegation called for increased international support for clearance operations and socio-economic development projects to enable Lebanon to meet its targets by 2020.

70. **Mr. Al Musharakh** (United Arab Emirates) said that pollution by such devices remained a security problem in many regions. Contamination was affecting millions of civilians and thousands of peacekeeping and demining personnel. There were also environmental concerns and problems for the social and economic development of countries and regions. Despite reductions in the number of victims thanks to rapid assistance, awareness raising, victim assistance and calls for the destruction of stockpiles by the United Nations and national governments, his delegation remained concerned by the high number of injuries in non-conflict areas. While applauding the transfer of responsibility for demining to the national level, his Government felt it was vital for countries to protect civilians in populated areas, as the number of conflicts was rising. His delegation supported the draft resolution and called on countries to provide assistance in the form of funding or experts. His Government was providing mine action assistance to Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan, as well as financial contributions to United Nations demining activities. That assistance

took the form of training centres, new roads and infrastructure worth 28 million dollars, national capacity building and training of experts, awareness raising, and “train the trainer” programmes in relevant countries. The role of the United Nations should be strengthened to include the dissemination of sophisticated demining techniques and other assistance to governments and victims.

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71. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution [A/C.4/70/L.8](#), which had no programme budget implications.

72. **Mr. Winid** (Poland), introducing the draft resolution, said that Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, and the United States of America had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.8 was adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.