

Call to Order and Minute of Silence

&

Opening Remarks

on the occasion of the

**16th International Meeting
of Mine Action National Programme Directors and UN Advisors**

Ms. Agnès Marcaillou

Director, UNMAS

Geneva, 10 April 2013

[Entire session is maximum 30 minutes – 9:00 to 9:30]

[Part One: Call to order and Minute of Silence – approximately 3 minutes]

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Dear Friends of Mine Action,

Welcome to the 16th National Directors Meeting in Geneva hosted by the GICHD and the United Nations. I have the honour to officially call this year's meeting to order.

Following past tradition, I would like to ask you now to join me in a minute of silence in memory of colleagues we have lost this past year as well as to all victims of the continued existence and use of these deadly explosive hazards. May we reach a day when we add no more new names to this list.

Please join me in a minute of silence.

[minute of silence]

I thank you.

I am pleased to be joined here by my close collaborators Ambassador Stephan Husy of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Mine Action (GICHD) and Mr. Jan Mattsson of United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

Before turning to Ambassador Husy, I wish to say a special work of thanks. Without the support of GICHD, this meeting here in Geneva would not have been possible. I warmly thank him and our colleagues at GICHD for their support and assistance in the entire planning process. Ambassador Husy, Stephan, you have the floor.

[GICHD speaks – approximately 7 minutes]

Thank you Stephan for your kind words. Many of you are quite familiar with our next speaker and of the work of UNOPS. I am pleased that Jan has been able to join us today. Please, you have the floor.

[UNOPS speaks– approximately 7 minutes]

[Part Two: Opening Remarks – approximately 10 minutes or less]

Thank you Jan.

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here for my second annual mine action meeting.

The United Nations Secretary-General has outlined five priorities for his second term:

- Sustainable development;
- preventing conflicts, disasters, human rights abuses and development setbacks;
- building a safer and more secure world, which includes standing strong on fundamental principles of democracy and human rights;
- supporting nations in transition; and
- working for women and young people.

Each of these priorities is addressed through our collective work in mine action – and most of them have been central to our approaches since we began working.

Mine action is about human security. It is about achieving development. Above all, it is about restoring to human beings their rightful dignity of victims and former combatants. Mine action prevents deadly conventional explosive weapons from causing further indiscriminate harm and from wreaking havoc and insecurity. Mine action provides assistance for the care, rehabilitation and the socio - economic reintegration of victims and survivors. Mine action supports national capacities and promotes national ownership while also creating jobs, transforming danger zones into productive land and setting communities on a course toward lasting stability.

In all of our programmes, the United Nations is adamant that mine action is inherently linked with larger development plans to promote agricultural production, strengthen infrastructure, improve access to water supply and provide better education and health services. These are essential to reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and they greatly impact on women, children and young people in the affected countries.

We have also seen the evolution of our work on landmines and explosive remnants of war in humanitarian mine action to incorporate addressing weapons and ammunition management. Mine action operators continue to bring their expertise and capacity to bear to assist in stockpile management in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya and Cote d'Ivoire.

We, the mine action practitioners, are a network of people and institutions that can bring about concrete results for the benefit of those who are in need. We must continue to strive for perfection in our work and to be innovative – together. Our cooperation and coordination is tantamount to our strategic and practical success.

The new UN Strategy on Mine Action 2013-2018 is an example of One UN in action. The fact that we have this framework and that we work towards catalytic synergy, we build on each other's strengths and find ways to add value through our joint efforts.

We have organized a special event at noon today and I will introduce the new UN Strategy which is a culmination of an unprecedented intensive and inclusive consultative process involving all 14 members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Group on Mine Action together with affected states, donor countries and civil society organizations.

With this strategy, the UN will continue to deliver as One to 'save lives' and to ensure that the needs, rights and dignity of survivors are protected and restored; that security and stability will enable development; and that eventually, we will all live in a world free from the threat of mines, cluster munitions, and explosive remnants of war.

I wish you all a productive meeting in the days ahead.