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# General Assembly

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**FOURTH COMMITTEE SENDS DRAFT RESOLUTION ON MINE ACTION  
TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR ADOPTION, TWO ON OUTER SPACE**

**Mine Clearance Efforts Shift from Humanitarian Focus to Socio-Economic Impact on Affected Communities, Joint Inspection Unit Reports in Briefing**

Remarkable recent achievements in mine action demonstrated the United Nations' ability to "deliver as one," delegates in the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) heard today as they concluded their consideration of assistance in mine action, with the approval of a draft resolution on that topic.

By the terms of that text, the General Assembly, deeply alarmed by the number of mines that continued to be laid each year as well as the presence of a decreasing but still very large number of, and area of square kilometres contaminated by, mines and explosive remnants of war, would call for the continuation of the efforts of States to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries in which mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the local civilian population.

By related provisions, the General Assembly would urge all States, in particular those with the capacity to do so, as well as the United Nations system and other relevant bodies to support mine-affected States, by providing assistance for the development of national mine-action capacities; support for national programmes; reliable, predictable, timely and, where possible, multi-annual contributions for mine-action activities; and the information and technical, financial and material assistance to locate, remove, destroy and otherwise render ineffective minefields, mines, booby traps, other devices and explosive remnants of war.

The Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Dmitry Titov, said that 2012 and 2013 had been extraordinary years for the mine-action sector. Introducing the report on assistance in mine action, he said that more than 44.5 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines had been destroyed and an unprecedented number of mined and suspected hazardous areas had been cleared and declared safe. That hard work translated into "lives saved, roads and airports cleared, schools reopened and land returned to agricultural use".

But there was no room for complacency, he warned, because armed conflicts in the last two years, in Libya, Mali and Syria, and elsewhere, had exposed civilians to the dangers of landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices. Trade and livelihoods in more than 60 countries and territories remained threatened by roads and land still implanted with mines. To meet those problems, the Organization, led by its Mine Action Service, would continue its work, which "millions of people in this troubled world legitimately expected from the United Nations".

Also briefing the Committee today was Istvan Posta, Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit, who said that the nature of mine action had evolved from a humanitarian focus to an increasing emphasis on the socio-economic impact on affected communities. Mine action was considered a success in several ways, among which was the integration of international legal standards by many countries. However, more inclusive and transparent management of the Voluntary Trust Refund was necessary. Further, the United Nations should assign an existing body to bridge the gap between mine action and the health systems to deal with the victims.

Ken Herman, Senior Adviser on Information Management Policy Coordination, Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, also addressed the Committee, and noted that in the view of many agencies, the Joint Inspection Unit's report missed an important opportunity to demonstrate the overall success of the mine-action sector in decreasing the number of accidents related to mines and unexploded ordnance.

Several delegates reported on the mine-action efforts in their countries, with many emphasizing that mines represented, not just a danger to life and limb but also a challenge to economic development. The representative of Libya lamented that the mine-contaminated areas were often agricultural, which prevented countries from exploiting resources fully and investing in the land. Some of the anti-personnel mines left behind by the battalions of the former regime were able to evade detection. The high cost of mine clearance and the sophisticated technology it required was a further challenge in developing countries.

"Action for clearance was action toward saving lives, enabling development, and building and enhancing security and stability," the representative of Lebanon agreed. Though his country had achieved significant progress in mine clearance, it still suffered from heavy recontamination, from the more than 4 million cluster bombs dropped on its territory by Israel. The Organization and the country were working together in mine-risk education, victim assistance and rapid response. Those interventions, he said, were "smart, specific, time-bound and measureable", and focused on both immediate relief and long-term recovery.

Picking up that thread, Afghanistan's representative said that more than three decades of war had left the country heavily mined and "littered" with abandoned landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The country was doing more for land mine eradication now than at any other time in its history. But even with 75 per cent of former landmines cleared, the remaining 25 per cent represented more civilian casualties than any other landmine-affected country.

Cuba's delegate said that landmine use was part of the country's defence doctrine and an expression of the resolve of its people to protect the nation's independence. In accordance with the United Nations Charter, Cuba would continue that policy as long as it was subjected to aggression. He nevertheless encouraged the Organization's mine clearance and rehabilitation programmes, and supported the draft resolution on mine assistance because it addressed the humanitarian aspect without detriment to the legitimate needs of the self-defence of Member States.

Before opening its annual debate on mine action, the Committee concluded its consideration of the peaceful uses of outer space with the consensus approval of two draft resolutions on that topic: Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration of outer space; and International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Contributing to the debate on mine action were the representatives of Guatemala, Iraq, Peru, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Ukraine, Japan, Colombia, New Zealand, Croatia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, Mauritania, China, Australia, and Bosnia Herzegovina. A representative of the European Union delegation also addressed the Committee.

The representative of Thailand made a general statement on the draft resolution on mine action.

The Fourth Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Monday, 4 November, to begin its comprehensive review of special political missions.

### Background

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) met this morning to begin its review of assistance in mine action, for which it had before it a report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action (document [A/68/63](#)) and a note by the Secretary-General (document [A/68/63/Add.1](#)) containing comments on that report. The Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (document [A/68/305](#)), and a draft resolution on that topic (document [A/C.4/68/L.9](#))

Also today, the Committee was expected to consider two draft resolutions on outer space (documents [A/C.4/68/L.2](#) and [A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1](#)).

### Action on Outer Space Texts

Acting without a vote, the Committee first approved draft resolution "L.2", entitled Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration of outer space. Submitted by Japan in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the text would have the General Assembly recommend several elements for consideration by States when enacting regulatory frameworks for national space activities, in line with national law.

Among those recommendations, that the scope of space activities targeted by national regulatory frameworks might include the launch of objects into and their return from outer space, the operation of a launch or re-entry site and the operation and control of space objects in orbit, and possibly the design and manufacture of spacecraft, the application of space science and technology, and exploration activities and research.

Also, that the conditions for authorization of space activities should be consistent with the international obligations of States, in particular under the United Nations treaties on outer space, and with other relevant instruments, and might reflect the national security and foreign policy interests of States; and that the conditions for authorization should help to ascertain that space activities are carried out in a safe manner and minimize risks to persons, the environment or property and that those activities do not lead to harmful interference with other space activities.

The Committee then turned to the draft resolution "L.3/Rev.1", entitled International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, approving it without a vote. Also submitted by Japan in its capacity as Chair of the Outer Space Committee, the text would have the Assembly express deep concern about the fragility of the space environment and the challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and in that context, urge all States, particularly those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

By a further provision of that wide-ranging text, the Assembly would consider that States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and call for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris.

The Assembly would emphasize the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic

growth and sustainable development.

### Briefings

ISTVAN POSTA, Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit, said the nature of mine action had evolved from a humanitarian focus to an increasing emphasis on the socio-economic impact on affected communities, with the aim of that effort its integration into national development plans. Mine action was considered a success in several ways, including in the integration by many countries of the international legal framework and standards. Also, non-governmental organizations played a key role, and the international community had made progress towards reducing death and injury. Humanitarian assistance and national ownership of mine action in development had been furthered. However, of the seven recommendations made, improved management of the Voluntary Trust Fund, and informal discussions had confirmed the call for a revision of the terms of reference of the Fund to ensure that it was more inclusive and transparent, and independent in terms of governance. The inspectors had concluded that there was a gap between mine action and the health systems to deal with the victims, and agreed that the United Nations should assign an existing body to bridge that gap.

KEN HERMAN, Senior Adviser on Information Management Policy Coordination, Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, introduced the note of the Secretary-General and of his Secretariat. He said that the organizations of the United Nations system welcomed the comprehensive review and analysis in the Joint Inspection Unit's report and viewed it as a valuable contribution to the system's efforts for continuous improvement. However, agencies also felt that the report fell short in several important ways. For example, within the range of statistics presented, it did not sufficiently highlight the success achieved by mine action, including improved livelihoods and accelerated socio-economic development. In the view of many agencies, the report missed an important opportunity to demonstrate the overall success of the mine-action sector in decreasing the number of accidents related to mines and unexploded ordnance.

DMITRY TITOV, Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, said that 2012 and 2013 had been remarkable years for the mine-action sector. More than 44.5 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines had been destroyed and an unprecedented number of mined and suspected hazardous areas had been cleared and declared safe. Improved risk-reduction tools had contributed to a global reduction in the number of mines, and 14 States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions had declared completion of the destruction of those weapons, with nearly 744,000 cluster munitions and 85.8 million explosive sub-munitions destroyed. There was also strong evidence of States' compliance with international humanitarian law measures — even from non-State parties — resulting in lives saved, roads and airports cleared, schools reopened and land returned to agricultural use. All of that demonstrated the United Nations' ability to “deliver as one” in the implementation and coordination of mine action.

Noting the endorsement last December of the *Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018* by the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group of Mine Action, he highlighted several recent achievements. Among them, casualty rates had declined in several countries. Cambodia, for example, recorded its lowest number of casualties since 1989. More land had been cleared and returned to affected communities; 14,000 “de-miners” in Afghanistan had removed explosive hazardous material from more than 300 communities, allowing more than 1 million people to access agricultural land. Populations at risk for mines had increased their knowledge and skills due to risk education, including 115,000 people in Libya and more than 360,000 people in Somalia. Finally, the rights of survivors and their families affected by mines had received victim assistance, especially in Colombia, through the Programme for Integrated Mine action, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Despite those positive results, “there was no room for complacency”, he said. At recent meetings of States parties to the Mine-Ban Convention, nine countries had been granted extensions to mine-clearance deadlines. And, for the past two years, armed conflicts, including in Libya, Mali and Syria, had exposed civilians to threats from landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive

devices. Furthermore, in more than 60 countries and territories, the threat of mines still hampered the clearance of land and roads, impeding the resumption of trade and the regeneration of livelihoods. Finally, new threats had emerged, compelling the Mine Action Service to readjust its activities on risk awareness, threat management and oversight of weapons and ammunition stockpiles destruction. The United Nations with the Mine Action Service in the lead should deploy specialized equipment and personnel in humanitarian emergencies, and explore innovative information technology to ensure safe practices and standards among the international mine-action community, as well as disseminate mine-removal training material. All such activities were eagerly awaited by the millions of people in today's troubled world; that was the legitimate expectation of the United Nations.

### Statements

CLARA GANSLANDT, representing the European Union delegation, said all 28 members of her group were now States parties to the Mine-Ban Convention, which was a demonstration of their collective commitment to free the world of the threat and use of those weapons. The European Union was particularly interested in efforts to address post-demining challenges, ensure long-term support to victim assistance, promote universalization of the Convention and donor coordination, as well as explore the potentials for complementarity with other instruments. Highlighting the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she said that the Union supported the development of synergies on the implementation of international humanitarian disarmament instruments. It also welcomed the resolution on mine action and especially appreciated the strong reference to rapid response, which allowed the United Nations to respond more quickly and flexibly at the outset of any emergency.

GABRIEL ORELLANA ZABALZA ( Guatemala) said while progress had been made in recent years in assistance to the victims, much remained to be done. The disarmament of those weapons played a fundamental role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Guatemala was aware of the humanitarian and socio-economic impact of mines and the responsibility of States in their effective eradication. On the regional level, however, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) would continue to carry out its programmes of removal, the acquisition of technology to ensure de-miners' safety, as well as the efforts in civilian education. However, in the context of the landmine resolution, Guatemala encouraged the United Nations to strengthen the victim assistance and support their reintegration into socio-economic roles through a general framework funded by all Member States. It also called on the Secretariat to develop a general legal capacity to address the continued use of those weapons, which contravened international law. The Committee must recognize State responsibility in that regard, and he called its engagement in the enforcement of landmine removal.

The representative of Iraq said due to long years of war, Iraq suffered from concentrated mine contamination in its northern regions, as well as various forms of unexploded ordnance in the south. That was a serious threat to Iraqis and also hindered infrastructure development and economic progress. The affected communities were mostly rural and agricultural, and based on the damage monitoring system in 2011, there had been 30 cases of mine-related accidents, and 60 per cent of the reported mine explosions had targeted people between age 25 and 44. Iraq had launched a field survey programme in various provinces and would be expanding it to other affected regions. Among its major challenges in removal was the lack of information and maps specifying locations. His Government had undertaken several projects and was working to raise awareness among its citizens, through programmes in schools and local communities. It was also teaching citizens to deal with unexploded mines and ordnance and offering training programmes to the disabled to reintegrate them. The Government had ratified the Mine-Ban Convention and had committed to eliminating mines from the country by 2018.

GUSTAVO MEZA-CUADRA VELÁSQUEZ (Peru) sharing some of the country's significant progress, said that it had used its own resources, in addition to United Nations aid, to update its national de-mining standard, increase its number of mine clearance personnel and implement the use of new technologies, including automated mechanisms, trained dogs and a universal manual on proper mine clearance. In cooperation with Ecuador, it had eradicated the anti-personnel mines surrounding police stations, penitentiaries and other safeguarding institutions in the country, and both had engaged

in joint efforts to de-mine their borders; they could now declare them “nearly free” of mines. Finally, Peru and Ecuador had held regular coordination meetings and engaged in cooperation with a strong bi-national result in humanitarian mine clearance, a unified register of the victims, and the provision of medical and regenerative aid in support of victims’ sociological and economic well-being.

IBRAHIM DABBASHI ( [Libya](#)) said in addition to the loss of life, mines deprived large regions of economic development, especially agricultural, preventing countries from exploiting their resources fully and investing in their land. Moreover, the high cost of mine clearance demanded sophisticated technological expertise, undermining the capacity of developing countries to rid their territories of mines and unexploded ordnance. Since the Second World War, many dangerous devices had been planted over a large area of Libya, which had weathered great material losses over the last few decades.

He said his country had an additional problem owing to the anti-personnel mines left behind by battalions of the former regime. Scorning international humanitarian law, they had planted many hundreds of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines on Libyan land. De-miners had noted that Al-Qadhafi’s mercenaries and armed forces had planted five types of landmines, some of them extremely technical and able to evade detection. For the Libyan Government, therefore, mine clearance was urgent but could not be accomplished without United Nations’ assistance. Libya called for a special programme for countries emerging from conflict that focused on mine clearance and education.

MOHAMMAD TAQI KHALILI ( [Afghanistan](#)) said more than three decades of war had left Afghanistan heavily mined and that “the country was still littered with” abandoned landmines and other explosive remnants of war posing a great threat to the lives of Afghans and further jeopardizing the security and development of Afghanistan, even where conflict had ceased. Afghanistan was doing more for land mine eradication now than any time in its history, including the enlistment of international efforts and the introduction of new technologies, however even with 75 per cent of former landmines cleared, the 25 per cent left more civilian casualties compared to any other landmine affected country since the beginning of 2013 — just under one million Afghans lived within 500 meters of minefield contaminated areas, preventing them from expanding their farms, raising livestock and otherwise safely living their daily lives. As a result, Afghanistan had commenced work on a ten-year plan in line with the Ottawa Treaty extension that would see Afghanistan mine free by 2023. As the United Nations Mine Action Service had been vital to the process of eradicating landmines in Afghanistan, its government had sent a letter to all Member States to consider supporting mine action in the country. Without such support, Afghanistan would not be able to emancipate itself from the threat of landmines.

AHMED AL-MAHMOUD ( [United Arab Emirates](#)) said that despite United Nations efforts, mines still caused deaths and disability, including among members of humanitarian agencies. That problem could not be solved without international synergy. His Government had participated in a number of programmes, such as one to eliminate sub-munition clusters as part of reconstruction projects, following the Israeli War. The United Arab Emirates had also supported the mine clearance project in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with a contribution of \$20 million, and had participated in several public education programmes for people living in regions with mines and unexploded ordnances. His country fully supported the vital role played by the United Nations to put an end to the risks of mines and all types of ordnances and projectiles, which struck people indiscriminately.

CHARBEL WEHBI ( [Lebanon](#)) said his country presented a serious case of the devastating impact of mines and other explosive remnants of war. Having achieved significant progress in mine clearance, it still suffered from heavy recontamination, from the more than 4 million cluster bombs dropped on its territory by Israel. That posed a direct threat to Lebanese citizens in affected areas and obstructed national socio-economic development and reconstruction efforts, which reinforced poverty and the fear of movement in the poorest communities. Lebanon, therefore, welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service, which, in partnership with the Lebanon Mine Action Center, was emphasizing mine-risk education, victim assistance and rapid response as strategic measures towards civilian protection, facilitation of humanitarian aid and construction of national capacities.

Those interventions, he said, were “smart, specific, time-bound and measureable, with the dual

aim of immediate relief and long-term recovery”. That said, mine infestation remained a serious challenge in Southern Lebanon, where landmines still posed a daily threat to Lebanese civilians. The country welcomed the ongoing collaboration of United Nations agencies to help Lebanon meet its obligation under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. “Realizing a landmine-free area is less costly than the resumption of conflict,” he said. When the international community put contamination in both a strategic and human perspective, “action for clearance is action toward saving lives, enabling development, and building and enhancing security and stability”.

NORACHIT SINHASENI( Thailand) expressed disappointment and deep concerned with the Secretary General’s report because of its “unsubstantiated reference and observation about Thailand”. Proper reference to the source of information, as well as appropriate consultations among all concerned parties, was vital for reaching any conclusion to be included in the report. Thailand strongly urged that due care be taken to ensure that information contained in future reports was accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable. His countries had been among the first to have signed the Mine-Ban Convention and had played a constructive role under the treaty’s framework. It took pride in its record of providing humanitarian assistance to affected countries, but at the same time, felt that assistance to victims was inadequate. He called on Governments to take ownership, enhance public awareness, and mobilize resources, and on international partners to further the objective of the Mine-Ban Convention.

ANDRIY TSYMBALIUK( Ukraine) said national and international support to mine action must be sustainable and must encourage and support national initiatives and institutions. In recent years, Ukraine completed its first significant destruction project, which had enabled it to destroy 400,000 anti-personnel landmines of different types. It was committed to continue the destruction process to rid of 6 million landmines in stockpiles. The Government appreciated the commitment and generosity demonstrated by Canada, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, as well as by numerous organizations and the United Nations, to assist Ukraine with the implementation of the Mine-Ban Convention. His country would continue its support for the Convention’s universalization and the work relating to Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

NAOTO HISAJIMA ( Japan) said that as a State party to the Mine-Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Japan had extended support to mine-affected countries to help them implement their treaty obligations. Since 1998, it had continuously provided assistance to 49 countries and regions, amounting to approximately \$530 million for the clearance of landmines, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance, as well as for risk education and victims’ assistance projects. It also supported the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, including the United Nations Mine Service, UNDP and UNICEF, and was pleased to have become the largest financial contributor in 2013 to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund. He added that his country had nominated itself to succeed Australia as the next Chair of the Mine Action Support Group.

NESTOR OSORIO ( Colombia) said the cooperation of affected countries, donors, and civil society was necessary to attain a mine-free world and secure a safer world for future generations. Colombia was especially concerned about the increasing use of “improvised explosive devices”, which were manufactured by hand, using cheap materials, but those had a devastating impact. Such devices were being used in Colombia by non-State armed individuals, acting beyond the law. They were used to launch offensives against the State and protect strategic corridors. Colombia had called on such groups to desist from those actions. Because of those weapons’ indiscriminate placement, the country required substantive support from the international community. It would continue to enhance its mine clearance programme, as well as its education and assistance programme for victims.

DAVID RUSSELL ( New Zealand) said his country had given \$1 million in untagged core funding to the United Nations Mine Action Service to support its work in removing and destroying mines and stockpiles of explosive remnants of war and in providing landmine risk education, specifically in Cambodia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. He noted the relevance of the Mine Action Service’s activities with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, including the implementation of national standards for ammunition and weapons storage, the disposal of non-

serviceable ammunition, and training in weapons and ammunition safety management. He noted the Mine Action Service's important role in rapidly responding to the explosion of an ammunition depot in a populated area of Brazzaville in Congo that killed more than 200 people, injured 1,500 and displaced 20,000. The United Nations' ability to put the Mine Action Service staff on the ground to coordinate clearance operations and remove unexploded munitions was a "vivid illustration" of the Mine Action Service's value to the United Nations as a whole.

JADRANKA BOŠNJAK(Croatia), associating herself with the European Union, said that Croatia had been affected by mine-related problems for more than two decades, following the 1991 aggression and war. The Government had made significant progress in developing domestic capacity to tackle mine-related issues, including their humanitarian, social and economic consequences. The Croatian Mine Action Centre, established in 1998, had developed its own model based on guidelines recognized by the international mine-action community, and had also adopted a national mine-action strategy. It had established an office for mine action in 2012 to strengthen the existing system and raise awareness on the dangers of those weapons. As one of the first States to have signed and ratified the Mine-Ban Convention, Croatia was pleased that additional States had ratified or acceded to that instrument and welcomed progress in its implementation.

PHETTHANOUSONE PHOMMALATH (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said the Government attached great importance to addressing humanitarian concerns caused by explosive remnants of war and was supportive of the relevant international legal framework. The country's strong advocacy for the ratification and effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was rooted deeply in having been one of the most affected in the world by those weapons. He disclosed that, as a State party to that Convention, the Government had made great effort in fulfilling its obligation and had adopted a long strategy on mine action, known as "Safe Path Forward", aimed at addressing the impact of unexploded ordnance, as well as other strategic visions to ensure that individuals and communities lived in safe environment and to contribute to development.

RICARDO ALDAY GONZÁLEZ( Mexico) said the contributions of the Mine-Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions were undeniable in strengthening civilian protection and in raising awareness about the risks. But a minority of States had not prohibited mines and cluster munitions, under various pretexts. Mexico urged them to consider becoming parties to those important Conventions. Laudable progress had been achieved in the destruction of landmines, the clearing of contaminated areas and the provision of victim assistance. But recently, that progress had been stymied due to armed conflicts. Mexico welcomed the establishment of the Organization's strategy on mine action, which underscored the cross-cutting nature of the process and was underpinned by a human rights-based approach. His country also emphasized the need for South-South and triangular cooperation as a way of exchanging good practices between affected States and others in a position to provide assistance.

JIDDOU JIDDOU ( Mauritania) welcomed the tremendous efforts made by the United Nations Mine Action Service. Mine clearance efforts were not what they were in the past, with a focus on just removing the threat; the focus now on incorporating humanitarian measures in the reintegration of victims into their communities, as well as their socio-economic well-being were of paramount importance. Mauritania regretted the decline in international funding. Though fewer threats of landmines remained in the north of the country, its border on the Western Sahara, owing to the long-term war from 1975 to 1991, still affected its fishing industry, transnational trade and the developing tourism industry. As a result, Mauritania had embarked on a national mine clearance programme in 2006 bringing together de-mining specialists and landmine experts to educate the community on the dangers of those weapons. It had also mobilized human resources to assist victims. The country was determined to meet its obligations, but that endeavour required further oversight by United Nations agencies, especially in developing maps to determine the location of the affected areas.

HE YI ( China) said his country took very seriously the fulfilment of its international obligations relating to mine action and the provision of assistance to mine-affected countries. China was actively engaged in international humanitarian assistance to aid countries affected by mines, unexploded

ordnance and other remnants of war. Since 1998, it had allocated funds on a yearly basis for mine clearance. So far, China had provided mine clearance and victim assistance to 40 countries and had trained more than 400 professional de-miners. China would continue to participate in international exchanges and cooperation in the field of mine action.

CHRIS BACK ( [Australia](#)) stressed his country's steadfast and long-standing record on arms control, especially mine action, and had actively engaged through international instruments. Australia's comprehensive approach to mine-action cooperation and assistance focused on improving the quality of life for victims, reducing deaths and injuries and enhancing national capacity to manage mine clearance activities. Australia had reached its commitment to contribute \$100 million over four years, two years ahead of schedule, in 2012, and had continued to support high-priority initiatives through additional financial support. In addition, the Government welcomed the progress in United Nations' mine action since the last report in 2011, as well as the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action for 2013-2018. Australia encouraged the Organization to build on existing monitoring and evaluation systems and strengthen national capacities.

AIDA HODŽIĆ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)), aligning herself with the European Union, said that as a post-conflict country, Bosnia and Herzegovina had made extensive efforts to address contamination from mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war that had posed serious threat to its population and development. It had developed a national structure on mine action through a governmental mine action centre, civil protection teams and a military demining battalion. It welcomed the United Nations Development Programme's technical assistance, policy advice and the further destruction of munitions stockpiles. Considering that the initial estimate of mine suspected areas was around 4,000 square-kilometres, significant progress had been made to reduce these areas by 69 per cent, enormously benefitting the nation socio-economically and environmentally. The country had adopted the United Nations Mine Action Strategy from 2009-2019, but it faced setbacks due to the dearth of stronger financial support from Member States, poor communication with traditional and new donor countries, and the lack of partnerships with the assisting financial organizations.

OSCAR LEÓN GONZÁLEZ( [Cuba](#)) said that his country recognized the significant role played by the United Nations mine action team and supported the efforts made internationally to address the dire humanitarian consequences of the use of mines. Cuba had a strict policy of using those only for defence purposes. It was a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as well as its Protocol II and strictly complied with its provisions on landmines. Their use was part of Cuba's defence doctrine and an expression of the resolve of its people to protect the country's independence. As long as Cuba was subjected to aggression and external actions seeking to overthrow its economic and political system, it would continue that policy, which was in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

He added that hundreds of Cuban medical officers were providing assistance to mine-action victims in Africa, Asia and Central America. Countries that had placed mines in the territories of other countries were under legal obligations to assist in their removal. The United Nations must continue to build national capacity in mine clearance and rehabilitation programmes. Regarding the draft resolution on mine assistance, it had not been an easy process to reach agreement as some delegations had sought to change the scope of the text. Cuba reiterated, however, that the resolution addressed the humanitarian aspect without detriment to the legitimate needs of the self-defence of Member States.

#### Action on Text

At the conclusion of its general debate, the Committee took up the draft resolution on assistance to mine action, "L.9".

Making a general statement, PANOTE PREECHYANUD ( [Thailand](#)) said his country had serious concerns regarding the source of information in the report. The Committee should take due care to ensure that the information contained in it was accurate and objectively verifiable, in close consultation with the bodies supporting it. That concern was aimed at strengthening its credibility in

achieving the goal of coordination and collaboration in the eradication of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

The Committee then approved the draft resolution without a vote.

By the terms of that text, the General Assembly would reaffirm its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian and development problems caused by the presence of mines and explosive remnants of war, which had serious and lasting social and economic consequences for the populations of affected countries and urge all such States to identify all areas under their jurisdiction or control containing mines and other explosive remnants of war in the most efficient manner possible and to employ land release techniques, including non-technical survey, technical survey and clearance.

Related terms of that text would encourage mine-affected States to proactively mainstream mine action and victim assistance requirements and their linkage with health care and disabilities agendas into development plans and processes to ensure that they were predictably funded. Additionally, the General Assembly would encourage Member States to support victims' access to appropriate medical care, physical and sensory rehabilitation, psycho-social support, education and skills training and income-earning opportunities.

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