

**BACKGROUND NOTE**  
**Plenary Session I. Mine Action and the Environment**

Date and time: Tuesday, 11 February 2020, 11:45a.m. – 1:00p.m.

Chair: **Brigadier General Jihad Al Bechelany**, Director, Lebanon Mine Action Center, Lebanon

Speakers: **Mr. Iain Overton**, Executive Director, Action on Armed Violence Researcher  
**Mr. Richard Boulter**, Programme Manager, UNMAS South Sudan  
**Dr. Sarah Njeri**, Academic Researcher, African Leadership Centre, King's College London

Location: Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

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**Introduction**

The use of explosive ordnance exacts a heavy toll on the environment – from the contamination of land and the eradication of livelihoods, to the health risks and pollution caused by toxic dusts. Through the removal of mines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), mine action helps to reduce the negative effects of conflict on people, infrastructure and the environment. National mine action authorities, the United Nations and other demining organizations are carrying out their operations in an efficient and safe manner, which also aims to minimize potential damage to the environment, in line with IMAS requirements on environmental protection. Mine action has always adapted to environmental challenges such as heavy rains, extreme heat and difficult to access terrain. As affected countries face increasing challenges related to climate change, such more frequent and larger-scale flooding, landslides, rising temperatures or drought, mine action agencies and entities will need to urgently scale up such efforts.

Moreover, as the international community continues to evolve and adapt its approach to peace, the role of environmental factors in sparking or exacerbating conflict is, more and more, coming under the spotlight. Mine action must be part of this ongoing discussion – both in terms of how it can adapt to a changing environment, and how the environmental impact of mine action can be mitigated.

**Purpose of the Session**

The goal of this session is to explore the linkages between mine action and the environment by looking at the environmental challenges mine action deals with, as well as the impact of mine action on the environment. This plenary will provide the opportunity to delve into environmental factors that should be taken into account prior to, during and after demining. It will also explore gaps and best practices in adapting operations to environmental changes, and what mitigation

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measures are available to reduce potential harm to the environment and raise awareness about the need to include environmental matters in mine action planning.

The session will feature presentations from academic, civil society and UNMAS field representatives, which will address the wider impact of explosive violence on the environment and explore how findings from this area can inform mine action efforts to adapt programming and operations to environmental challenges; and will spark discussion on broader considerations related to post conflict and peacebuilding efforts.

### **Format for the Plenary: (75 minutes)**

Introductory remarks by Chair	05 minutes
Presentation by AOAV	10 minutes
Presentation by UNMAS South Sudan	10 minutes
Presentation by Academic Researcher	10 minutes
Discussion and Q & A	35 minutes
Closing remarks by the Chair	05 minutes

### **Food for Thought:**

- What are the linkages between conflict, the environment and mine action? How are they playing out on the ground?
- How can the environment be better protected during mine action operations? Which best practices can be expanded or duplicated?
- What could be improved in mine action planning to continue to adapt to environmental change?