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Clearing mined areas

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Madam President,

The mine action sector continues to face longstanding obstacles that slow down the safe and effective clearance of mines and other explosive ordnance.

While several countries still grapple with legacy contamination, ongoing conflicts introduce new layers of complexity. In some contexts, such as in Ukraine, mixed contamination by different types of explosive ordnance makes clearance more difficult than where contamination is historically concentrated in minefields. Armed conflicts in urban or densely populated areas demand the adaptation of operational approaches. In Gaza, for example, clearance must be integrated with rubble management, including additional precautions for suspected victim-operated devices and careful assessment of EO presence.

Opportunities to improve efficiency while maintaining safety exist, in both technology and methods, but these are not fully leveraged. For example, despite the proven solidity of the land release approach, we still detect resistance towards reducing land through technical survey, even when evidence supports its use. Uptake also remains slow in terms of technology, such as the use of tools such as drone-mounted sensors, which could enhance operations.

In addition to these operational challenges, funding remains insufficient to match the scale of contamination. Even with generous contributions, the number of teams and assets is insufficient to address all existing and newly contaminated areas.

Against this backdrop, evidence-based planning and prioritisation become central to allow national mine action authorities to efficiently use limited resources. These, in turn, must rest on clear national strategies that identify goals and priorities; national mine action standards, which are necessary to achieve those priorities in line with global good practices and local conditions; solid systems to gather, validate and process information.

Efficiency in the use of resources is equally important. Operators are well placed to assess local contamination and design safe and effective methodologies. National Mine Action Authorities, when defining quality requirements in national standards, should avoid overly restrictive provisions that limit operational and technical flexibility. Instead, they should give operators the opportunity to demonstrate that their procedures and tools can meet the required

quality. This applies, for example, to standards governing mechanical assets or animal detection systems. It is also essential that national authorities take full ownership of performance management, starting with the definition of clear and relevant Key Performance Indicators.

Finally, the sector must continue to capture and share lessons from the field. In this regard, the Technical Note for Mine Action 10.10/03 Explosive hazard risk assessment in debris management (rubble removal) operations is a good example of a methodology developed by the field and globally codified to become available to the mine action sector. National authorities should encourage innovation and the integration of new tools, technologies and methodologies — supported by proper testing, evaluation and transparent dissemination of results.