Views of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pursuant to operative paragraph 16 of the General Assembly resolution 70/46,

July 2016,

Background and Overview:

Improvised Explosive Device (IED) is a type of unconventional explosive device manufactured in an improvised manner and used widely by terrorist groups such as the Taliban, Haqqani Network, Al Qaida and ISIL in Afghanistan. IEDs have become the weapon of choice for the terrorist groups in asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan. IEDs have been the leading cause of causalities among military and civilians in Afghanistan. Since 2001, the use of IEDs in Afghanistan has resulted in killing and maiming of thousands of civilians and military personnel, both Afghans as well as internationals and has caused massive destruction to infrastructure.

In 2015, IEDs killed 784 civilians and injured 2,715 others, in addition to killing 931 Afghan security forces and injuring 2,266 more. Only in the first quarter of 2016, IEDs have killed 101 and injuring 256 soldiers from the Afghan National Army personnel (ANA) and killed 100 and injured 187 others in the Afghan National Police (ANP).

The use of IEDs in Afghanistan have evolved over years and will continue to evolve in both in terms of materials used in IEDs manufacturing as well as techniques and tactics employed by terrorist groups in using IEDs. The Taliban group and Haqqani Network have used IEDs to assassinate senior government officials, members of Parliament (MPs), politicians, and target government building as well as crowds in public places like mosques. IEDs have also been used by terrorist groups to destroy infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, courts, bridges, electronic pylons, etc. Various forms of IEDs have been in use are as follows: pressure plate/victim activated IEDs, remote control/radio/command-operated IEDs, magnetic IEDs, suicide IEDs as well as other complex attacks. They are used increasingly in populated and urban areas of Afghanistan.

In recent years Taliban and other terrorist groups have reverted to use significant amount of chemical precursors and fertilizers such as ammonium nitrite, potassium chloride, RDX, water gel, C4, and TNT for manufacturing IEDs. Wide access to these materials as well as commercial explosives and detonators outside Afghanistan have resulted insignificant increase of IED attacks in Afghanistan since 2009. Improvised explosive devices, which have become increasingly common since 2008, rely on materials which cannot be found locally (anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, detonator cord, switches, blasting caps, remote detonators, and ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer). Most of this comes from across the porous Pakistan border.\(^1\) The increased use of chemical precursors and commercial materials in the manufacture of IEDs has become a major challenge for

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\(^1\) Monitoring Team report S/2012/683- Para 59, 2011
the Government of Afghanistan. Although various measures have been taken at the national level by the Government of Afghanistan to curb the impacts of IEDs, their use still pose a significant challenge to the Afghan Government and people. Production of high intensity ammonium nitrate in the region, particularly in Pakistan, is of grave concern to us. Pakistani companies in Multan city and several other companies in Pakistan like the Fatima Group, Wah Nobel, and Biafo have produced materials that have been used in manufacturing IEDs in Afghanistan. Despite the total ban and more frequent seizures of chemical precursors by Afghan National Security and Defense Forces, the availability of materials for IEDs outside Afghanistan for the Taliban and other terrorist groups appears to be limited only by the money available to buy them and the training available to use them.

Measures taken at the National Level:

To counter and mitigate the threat of IEDs in Afghanistan, the Government of Afghanistan has taken various steps including:

- Presidential decree No. 28 issued in 2012 bans procurement, supply, import, production, transportation, use, and trade of ammonium nitrite and 41 other fertilizers which can be used to manufacture IEDs in Afghanistan. Measures have been taken to detect, prevent, and seize ammonium nitrite shipments at the border ports and custom agencies across Afghanistan.
- Adoption of C-IED National Strategy in 2012 which provides a clear platform for a coordinated multi agency and overall Government approach addressing the IEDs issue. The strategy consists of five pillars; namely rule of law, security, governance, diplomatic engagement, and public awareness;
- Establishing C-IED multi agency working group led by the office of National Security Council, responsible for coordination of C-IED efforts among the government agencies and with international partners;
- C-IED capacity building and training programs for Afghan National Defense and Security Forces including on detection and defusing IEDs;
- Various public awareness campaigns including thorough engagement of religious and tribal leaders across the country with the aim to increase civilian awareness regarding IEDs threat; promote people’s collaboration with and reporting to the Government on IEDs related issues;
- Outreach efforts to neighboring countries with a view to promote cooperation on detection and prevention of chemical exports to Afghanistan which might have dual use and can be diverted to the IEDs manufacture.
- Establishment of Engineering Directorate within the Ministry of Interior with a view to prevent, detect and combat IEDs as well as develop C-IED capacities of the police forces across the country. This directorate together with other government agencies have so far defused 21,068 IEDs and have seized 94,686 kilogram improvised explosives, 162 suicide vests, and around 280,000 KG Ammonium Nitrate which was being smuggled into the country.
- Establishment of Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) and IEDs Disposal (IEDD) Training Centers, explosive material assessment and explosion analysis lab and restoration, and repairing of C-IEDs equipments centre;
- Training and deployment of 112 C-IEDs to Police Headquarters in all 34 provinces, Border Police HQs, within Special Forces Units and Public Safety Units.

**Challenges in C-IED efforts:**

- Need for technical assistance and capacity building for countering IEDs. As the IEDs threat evolve quickly, there is also need for CIED efforts to develop accordingly;
- Lack of regional cooperation for countering IEDs threat including information sharing, cooperation among custom officials, and border police and law enforcement and intelligence agencies of neighboring and regional countries.
- Lack of effective monitoring mechanism over the movements of chemical precursors, fertilizers, commercial explosives, and dual use components for IEDs in the region, especially end user monitoring mechanisms and prevent diversion. NONE of the dual-use materials for IEDs are produced inside Afghanistan.
- Speedy transfer of knowledge for IEDs manufacture specially through internet between terrorist networks which has led to increased number of IEDs used along with advanced technologies for IEDs manufacture; this often makes counter measures ineffective; Afghan National Security and Defense Forces have on various occasions seized manuals for making IEDs often written in Urdu;
- Wide and easy access of the Taliban and other terrorist groups to explosive materials, fertilizers, and other chemical elements outside Afghanistan;
- Lack of border cooperation in preventing smuggling of IEDs components to Afghanistan;
- Absence of strict regulations and know your customer measures by companies and business entities producing and supplying explosive materials and chemical components in some countries in the region;

**Recommendations:**

- IEDs kill and maim mainly civilians, including women and children. It should be universally condemned and should be accounted as a war crime. Perpetrators and their supporters using IEDs should be held accountable. Putting pressure include sanctions on countries which use proxies in pursuit of their political agenda and curtailing provision of IEDs materials to groups in order to carry out IEDs attacks in other countries, can prove helpful. There is a need to express strong determination by the international community to protect civilians all around the world from the scourge of IEDs;
- Given the growing magnitude of this problem and the fact that majority of the IEDs victims are civilians, the United Nations (UN) has a responsibility to address this issue in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner. Appointing a focal point or a UN entity with a
responsibility to bring coherence and coordination in UN efforts as well as international and regional C-IEDs efforts will be effective in addressing the multi faceted challenges of IEDs. Establishment of a comprehensive UN data center for collecting and analyzing IEDs data across the world will help better understand the scope and scale of the problem and therefore better utilize available opportunities to address the problem more effectively.

- Providing technical, financial, and material support to the most affected countries must be central in the international efforts aimed at preventing and mitigating the impacts of IEDs;
- There is a need to establish a system of accountability for countries, industries, and business entities whose products have been used in IEDs manufacture.
- Creation of norms and guidelines for the production, sell, supply, obtaining and handling of dual use materials which can be used for making IEDs, and promoting vigilance over their products as well as their customers;
- Engaging with industries and business entities to find ways to make it difficult for terrorist groups to divert fertilizers into the IEDs manufacture, i.e. decreasing the percentage of nitrate in ammonium nitrate products from 25% to 15%. Companies in Multan, Pakistan whose products have been widely used in manufacturing IEDs in Afghanistan must be held accountable and cooperate to address this issue. The final product will still have its industrial and agricultural usages but it would be difficult to easily use ammonium nitrate in making IEDs;
- Commercial detonators and detonating cords have been widely used in IEDs manufacture in Afghanistan. This has not only increased IEDs numbers used by terrorists but also led to constructing huge and complex IEDs with significant devastation and high causalities. It is important to prevent terrorist groups from accessing commercial detonators. This can considerably affect IEDs making process difficult for terrorist groups and is a more viable option to explore since detonators have specific usage by individuals and undertakings. Marking detonators can be a way to track the producers and prevent the diversion of detonators to terrorist hands. The use of high technology such as pin code in the commercial detonators can also prevent diversion of detonators to IEDs use;
- The impact of IEDs on victims and their families go beyond death and injuries. Therefore there is a need to provide sustained support to the victims of IEDs incidents. Establishment of a specific fund and allotment of resources would be helpful in providing necessary assistance to victims of IEDs;
- Strengthening cooperation on C-IED efforts at the national, regional and international level is of paramount importance. In particular, synchronizing C-IED efforts at the international level by the United Nations, as a credible universal international organization is essential;