Informal consultations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/72 on “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”

29 March 2017

On 29 March, pursuant to resolution 71/72, the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan convened informal consultations on “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices” in its capacity as lead sponsor.

In addition to the mandate contained in resolution 71/72, the consultations were organized with a view to early preparations of the next iteration of the resolution for the forthcoming 72nd session of the First Committee.

Afghanistan highlighted the outcome document of the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) that stresses “the need for coordination with various existing initiatives and approaches relating to IEDs, including through open informal consultations, as provided for by United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/72”. Reference was also made to General Assembly decision 59/95 that calls upon respective sponsors of resolutions to hold informal consultations, both before and during First Committee meetings, as a means of “improving effectiveness of the methods of work of the General Assembly”.

Six expert discussants from UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), World Customs Organization (WCO), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and INTERPOL made statements on the following themes which derive from resolution 71/72: — “International cooperation, assistance and information-sharing in countering the threat posed by IEDs, including the adequacy of financial support mechanisms” and “Mechanisms and initiatives addressing threats posed and harm caused by IEDs”.

The remarks of the experts discussants were followed by interactive debate with States. The themes themselves, the statements made by the expert discussants as well as the ensuing debate reflected the full range of issues connected to the issue of IEDs, including, *inter alia*, the humanitarian impact of their use, counter-terrorism activities, international technical assistance and cooperation, engagement with the private sector and the problem of coordination of the different actors in a field of growing importance.

**Highlights of remarks by expert discussants**

- **UNODA** presented the IED information hub now live on the web, which will be subject to regular updates. The hope was expressed that Member States and implementing partners will benefit from the improved accessibility and ease of navigation provided by the site. UNODA reminded States that the next report of the

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1 Resolution 71/72, OP23 “…encourages States to hold open, informal consultations “focusing on matters of coordination between the various existing initiatives and approaches relating to improvised explosive devices within the United Nations system and beyond”.

2 https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ieds/
Secretary-General on IEDs will be prepared for consideration at the 73rd session of the General Assembly.

- **UNMAS** presented an overview of its “IED Threat Mitigation” activities. Specific updates were offered on the development of DPKO/DFS Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings and IED disposal standards (IEDD) in coordination with Member States.

- **WCO** briefed participants on its Global Shield Programme, noting many successes since its establishment in 2010. Global Shield Activities, initially focused on Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, have now expanded to the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

- **INTERPOL** referenced its Chemical Anti-Smuggling Enforcement (CHASE) Programme and Watchmaker Database as useful tools for cross-border operation support and coordination. It also noted relevant IED activities focused on information and intelligence sharing, capacity-building and training.

- **UNIDIR** briefed on the status of its project “Examining the roles, responsibilities and potential contributions of the private sector industry actors in stemming the flow of IEDs and related materials”. The project seeks to explore how various industries, such as commercial explosive manufacturers, shipping or freight companies and ammunition manufacturers, can support international efforts to combat the manufacture of IEDs.

- **MAG** underscored its view of IEDs as indiscriminate by nature rather than indiscriminate by virtue of their use. It also highlighted the parameters of humanitarian response to a munition, including IEDs. Ongoing conflict was identified as a limiting factor in this regard. The distinction between humanitarian response and counter-terrorism activity was a focus of discussion in this context.