

Mine action vital to success of UN peace mandates, Security Council told

13 June 2017 – The mitigation of the threats posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war is vital to the success of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, as well as to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the return of displaced persons, and sustainable development, a senior UN official told the Security Council.

As an integrated component of peacekeeping and special political missions, mine action is critical to the safety, security and mobility of mission personnel and to effective and efficient mandate implementation along with its critical importance for protection of civilian populations, especially children and women, said Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, during a thematic debate.

The debate, titled ‘Comprehensive Approach to Mine Action and Explosive Hazards Mitigation,’ was proposed by Bolivia, which holds the Council’s presidency for the month. Explosive hazards have been a key concern, especially for troop contributing countries. Nathalie Ochoa Nina, of the UN Mine Action Service in Colombia also addressed the meeting.

Explaining how mine action contributes to UN activities on the ground, Mr. Zuev said that, for example, in Iraq, risk education campaigns and humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices allows the safe return of displaced populations and delivery of humanitarian assistance. In South Sudan, the use of explosive detection dogs ensures that the sites sheltering civilians are free from explosive hazards, he added.

He went on to explain how the destruction of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices is vital to conflict prevention because those explosive materials could be “recycled” to construct new improvised explosive devices.

He also said that employing former soldiers in the field of mine clearance could help create conditions conducive to peace.

UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is also coordinating development of standards for the disposal of improvised explosive devices. These standards, expected to be completed by the 72nd session of the General Assembly, will ensure conformity in training, equipment and operations, Mr. Zuev said.