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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in Gaza - presentation by Humanity & Inclusion

Following the meeting of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) of 7-8 February 2024, delegations will find in Annex the presentation made by Humanity & Inclusion⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾.

¹ Humanity & Inclusion, also known as Handicap International – ASSOCIATION FEDERATION HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL, identification number in the EU Transparency Register: 213754916822-68.

² This document contains a presentation by an external stakeholder and the views expressed therein are solely those of the third party it originates from. This document cannot be regarded as stating an official position of the Council. It does not reflect the views of the Council or of its members.



Context

- more than 26,000 Palestinians killed
- More than 60,000 injured at various severity
- Unknown number of amputations - access challenges prevent thorough assessment.
- More than 45,000 bombs dropped into Gaza in less than 90 days, among which hundreds of 2000 pound bombs in a 45km² perimeter- **2000 pounds bombs are rarely used in populated areas due to their devastating effects.**
- 50% of civilian infrastructure either destroyed or damaged
- Displacement of more than 1.5 million people - hundreds of thousands in the north, middle area and Khan Younis with no access to aid.
- 15% of the IDPs are estimated to have disabilities
- Before October 2023: in Gaza Strip 21% of households included a person with disabilities

Context linked to land contamination

Risk-taking behaviours towards EO/ERW during and after bombings

- Related to evacuation order or after the bombings

Comparison between the 2014 and the 2023 conflict in Gaza:

- 2023: 7,5 times more bombs dropped in Gaza
- More building being completely destroyed or severely damaged (potentially due to a change in tactics or destructive capacity) -> a broader impact on infrastructures

...Leading to long term EO contamination (specifically ERW)

- Higher number of damaged buildings -> more varied and widespread contamination -> larger area and potentially more complex and riskier clearance operations
- Lower estimate for ERW in 2023-24: 3.37 times higher than for 2014
- Heavy contamination result in long terms needs for the population (VA)



How can Member States act collectively and urgently to address the humanitarian consequences of bombing and shelling in oPt?

Member States must:

- call parties to the conflict to reach a ceasefire (a short term ceasefire does not allow personnel to properly reach the population in need)
- stop/halt the transfer of weapons, parts and ammunition that can be used to commit violations of IHL and HRL.
- advocate to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EW IPA) but also actively support the other commitments contained in the political declaration on EW IPA by:
 - > strongly condemning any attacks directed against civilians and civilian infrastructures (art 2.6)
 - > facilitating rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access (art 4.4)
 - > by providing or supporting assistance to victims as well as communities affected by armed conflict (art 4.5)
 - > ensuring the marking and destruction of ERW and support the provision of RE (art 3.5)
- ask respect of UNSC 2475/2019
- advocate and keep adequate level of funding to guarantee risk education, conflict preparedness and protection (CPP), victim assistance activities and all related activities, including EOD and the entry of the needed equipment in the Gaza Strip.⁴

How can Member States better respond to the needs of the affected populations (long/short term)? Mine action case.

Member States must:

- Strongly advocate with parties to the conflict to **ensure and guarantee access and safe passage for humanitarian assistance inside the Strip via all entry points and in all areas of Gaza, including the north.**
- Support the **integration of humanitarian mine action (HMA) activities into the humanitarian response** to increase the safety and effectiveness of the response (for targeted population and the humanitarian staff). States must:
 - Strongly advocate for **clearance land release activities** to be conducted to support return of displaced population in all areas.
 - support the **coordination between EOD teams and humanitarian organizations** to ensure that clearance efforts align with the most urgent humanitarian needs + ensure safe access for humanitarian response team
- Continue efforts to **mitigate the impacts of restrictive measures on humanitarian action**. To sustain and capitalize on UE's progress and efforts toward the protection of humanitarian assistance, Member States must:
 - **Avoid a broad interpretation of the designation criteria**, as this may pose additional challenges to the delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza
 - Explicitly **state that humanitarian demining activities are covered by the humanitarian exemption.**

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How can Member States better protect persons with disabilities in emergencies?

Member States must:

- Ensure that **humanitarian aid is tailored to the specific needs of persons with disabilities**, as identified in need assessments;
- Work towards the **full implementation of human rights frameworks**, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and reaffirm the implementation of the Commitments of the IASC Guidelines and Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.
- Demonstrate **long-term commitment to an inclusive humanitarian response by allocating the necessary resources and fostering partnerships with specialized actors.**
- **Refrain from using the suspension of funding as provisional measures** unless clear evidence is presented regarding the misuse of funds. The widespread and disproportionate use of suspension negatively impacts humanitarian organizations as well as human rights organizations, rendering monitoring of violations impossible.

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