



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Statement delivered by

H.E. Ms. Karen Van Vlierberge,  
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative

**Arria formula meeting of the Security Council**

**“Protecting the Peacekeeper: Suppressing the Deployment of  
Improvised Explosive Devices against Peace Operations”**

New York, 26 March 2021

Thank you, Mr. President,

It is an honour for Belgium to co-sponsor this important meeting and to participate in this discussion on a topic that is a high priority for my country.

Let me first thank the briefers, and particularly commend UNMAS for its extraordinary work in the development of standards and policies as well as in the management of demining operations and in explosive ordnance threat mitigation.

Mr. President,

As the briefers have demonstrated, attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are a threat to security and development. They can also strongly impact the work of peacekeeping operations. Too many lives have been lost among peacekeepers. The recent wave of IED attacks in Mali targeting Minusma is of particular concern. We would like to take this opportunity to honour the memory of the victims and present our condolences to their families.

Belgium is convinced that a more integrated and broader approach is necessary to enhance our capacity to tackle the threat of IEDs. In our view, the following elements could improve our response :

*First*, we should ensure the safe management of ammunition stockpiles and the swift disposal of explosive remnants of war, which often provide the base material for IED production. In this regard, we should not lose track of the need to decontaminate legacy minefields.

*Second*, we should gain better insight in the trafficking routes for explosives precursor material. Legitimate trade or mining activities sometimes serve as starting point for this illicit

trafficking. Peacekeeping operations and Panels of Experts can help gather knowledge on the IED supply chains. They should work closely together and consolidate information.

*Third*, on the basis of knowledge gained, we should take measures to prevent the diversion of precursors for the manufacture of IEDs.

*Fourth*, peacekeeping operations and other actors in the field should set up a system for the effective exchange of information on all incidents involving IEDs. This way, a shared knowledge base can be created which will help to adopt appropriate defensive measures and allow to remain up to speed on the rapidly evolving techniques used in IED-attacks.

During its mandate as non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2019-2020, Belgium undertook to incorporate this approach when renewing the mandates of peacekeeping operations, including MINUSMA and MINUSCA.

In April 2019, my country organised, together with Poland and Germany, an Arria-formula meeting of the SC entitled "Explosive ordnance threat mitigation: For the implementation of a coherent and comprehensive response". At that meeting our fellow citizen Major General Deconinck, former MINUSMA Force Commander, called for a broad "Counter-IED" strategy encompassing global control on ammunition, weapons, explosive ordnance and IED components and precursors. The UN Secretariat also formulated concrete proposals to improve pre-deployment training of peacekeepers, to consider mine action at the earliest stages of mission planning and to enhance the technical capabilities and techniques to address the threat of IED's. These policies are sound and their implementation should be regularly evaluated in reports to the SC on peacekeeping operations.

Finally, Mr. President, more recently, during the negotiation of the C-34 report this month, my country stressed the importance of proper weapon and ammunition management by peacekeeping operations in line with the safety standards of the relevant UN manuals, policies and standard operating procedures. We also encouraged Member States and the Secretariat to better equip peacekeeping operations on weapons and ammunition management, to strengthen host government capacities, to address the proliferation of weapons and ammunition, prevent loss and other diversion of military equipment, including of possible pre-cursors for improvised explosive devices, and prevent accidental explosions. These elements were introduced in the C-34 report that has just been adopted by consensus. My country also walks the talk, Mr. President, as Belgian Mobile Training Teams (MTT) work in support of MINUSMA, providing education and training in, among other things, Counter-IED and medical skills. Belgium also contributes to the equipment of the Group of Five Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) in C-IED material with 1.000.000 € (2018-2022). Furthermore, we

support (200.000 EUR) the NATO Defense Capacity Building Package for UN Peacekeeping Training, specifically the Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices project.

I thank you.