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Special Political and Decolonization Committee

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Topic A:

Definition:

According to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), **mine action** is defined as any "activity which aims to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of mines, and exploded remnants of war (ERW) including unexploded sub-munitions."

Essentially, mine action consists of the policies taken by member states, the United Nations and other international organizations, and NGOs in order to remove undetonated mines and furthermore mitigate the negative effects of mines on affected individuals' health, economic wellbeing, and overall quality of life. As members of SPECPOL, delegates will be tasked creating and passing resolutions that comprehensively address these issues.

Michael Kohn / Special to the Chronicle

History of the Topic

Land mines originated in China in the late 13th century during the Song Dynasty. The technology spread to Europe during the 16th century, where an early form was used in many European militaries. However, the first mines with mechanical fuses did not appear until the American Civil War, when the Confederates used them, calling them "land torpedoes".

During World War I, both the Allied and Central Powers used mines extensively.

While engaging in trench warfare, each side would lay land mines outside their trenches as a defensive mechanism. They also would lay "tunnel mines" by digging tunnels underneath adversaries' trenches and leaving munitions there; the resultant explosions would destroy enemy trenches from below.

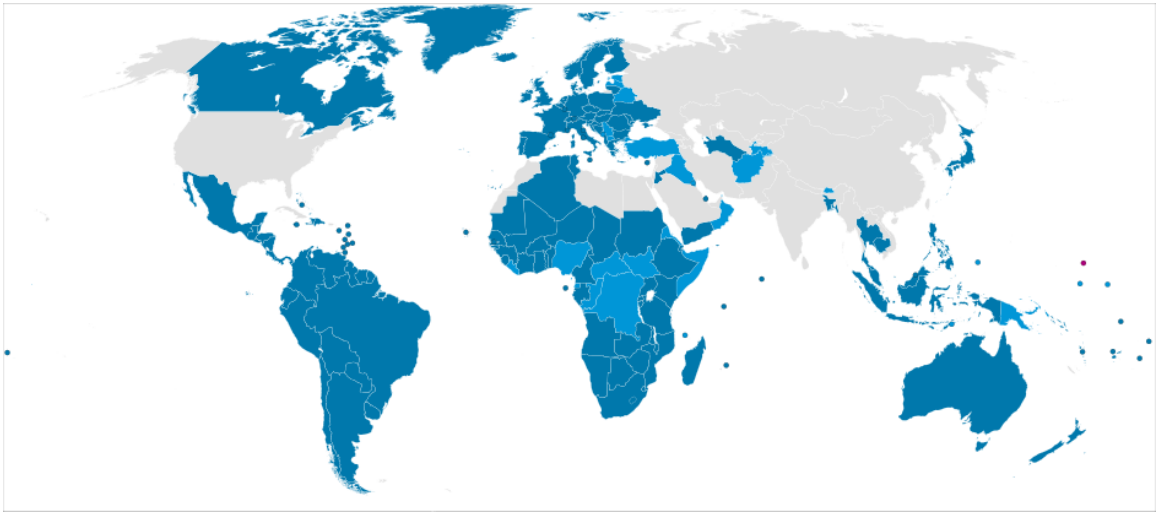
Land mines were used in many conflicts throughout the 20th century, most notably in World War II and in the Korean and Vietnam wars; the Korean DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) still remains laden with mines. Soviet forces used mines frequently during their 10-year occupation of Afghanistan. The impact of those unexploded mines compounds Afghanistan's already-serious struggles to this day, as the presence of land mines have rendered large swaths of the country uninhabitable.

Relevant International Legislation:

While limits on the use of land mines had been mooted for much of the 20th century, the first concrete attempt at imposing such restrictions can be found in the drafting of the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). The CCW placed limits on land mines and other "non-discriminate weapons", but failed to garner comprehensive international support. In addition, the CCW did not contain an outright ban on land mines, which caused widespread outrage and led to the formation of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in 1991.

Through the persistent advocacy of the ICBL, the Mine Ban Treaty (also known as the Ottawa Treaty) was written and signed in 1997. The Ottawa Treaty required that its signatories:

- Stop developing and/or manufacturing anti-personnel mines (APMs)
- Destroy their existing stockpiles of APMs within 4 years of ratification
- Clear all of its mined areas within 10 years of ratification



These requirements are demanding, but it should be noted that they have yielded significant results. For instance, after a special initiative of the Rwandan military to clear the 9,000 mines on its territory, the entire country was declared mine-free in 1999. However, the no-exceptions language of the Mine Ban Treaty has also created some challenges, mainly the refusal of 34 UN member states to ratify the treaty. The holdouts include the major military powers—the United States, Russia, and China. The list also includes India, Pakistan, and both North and South Korea, countries that have been engaged in longstanding border conflicts that involve land mines. Without the support of these nations, a global consensus on the use of land mines becomes extremely difficult to achieve.

(The map found on the next page indicates global support for the Mine Ban Treaty. Countries in dark blue have ratified the treaty, those in light blue have signed but not ratified it, and those in gray are not parties to the treaty).

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is another relevant international treaty; it places limits on the use of cluster bombs, which are munitions that can spread large amounts of unexploded "submunitions", including land mines, over a region. The CCM faces many of the same challenges as the Ottawa Treaty: a lack of support from and prioritization by leading countries.

The Role of the United Nations:

The core of any United Nations mine action policy (and by extension, the starting point for your research) is the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). According to the organization's website, UNMAS was established in 1997, by the General Assembly, to serve as the UN focal point for mine action, which means its job is to coordinate the numerous discrete mine action programs being conducted by the UN's many subsidiaries and affiliates. In particular, UNMAS works with 14 other organizations, including UN peacekeeping forces, the UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, the World Health Organization, and the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) to assist member states and territories augment their own mine action capabilities.

UNMAS generally secures funding for its programs through other peacekeeping budgets or through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (UN VTF). The VTF has taken in a substantial US $33.5 million in 2014, but it should be noted that VTF funds have to be distributed across UNMAS programs in 30 different countries.

Five Pillars of Mine Action

UNMAS organizes its mine action activities into five main "pillars" or categories:

Clearance

The most direct aspect of mine action, clearance involves the identification, surveying, and eventual removal of landmines and ERW (explosive remnants of war) from a minefield. The UNMAS engages in humanitarian mine clearance, which means that operations must remove all potentially explosive munitions from an area so that humans can inhabit it. Before clearance can take place, impact and technical surveys need to be conducted and the field needs to be marked so that people do not unintentionally enter it. The actual

clearance operation consists of one or more of three tactics:

- Manual clearance involves trained individuals that identify mines using a metal detector and then destroy them in a contained explosion
- Mine detection dogs use smell to locate the mines; the destruction protocol is similar to manual clearance
- Mechanical clearance consists of using armored bulldozers with special attachments to clear mines; while the technique has the potential to become the primary mine clearing technique, the machines are often too expensive, fail to destroy the mines, or cannot be used in some terrains

It should be noted that, for sovereignty and practical reasons (UN agencies are essentially advisors), clearance is normally carried out by state-level entities or in specific cases UN peacekeeping forces.

Mine Risk Education (MRE)

MRE refers to the many education/awareness programs carried out by the UN to decrease the risk of human injury from landmine detonation—essentially teaching locals how to avoid mines. MRE is often provided in a targeted manner in areas where the number of landmines has recently increased, for instance, in Gaza in 2009.

One aspect of MRE is "public information dissemination", which consists of broad announcements that can inform an entire community of the risks posed to them by mines. The second is "education and training", which focuses on landmine safety training in schools and in high-risk occupations. This is particularly relevant because it directly addresses children, who are often the victims of hidden land mines. Finally, the UN offers "community liaison" services, meaning that UN officials serve as a link between national governments and the affected region so that the community's are better addressed by national governments.

Victim Assistance

The United Nations is committed to ensuring that victims of landmines receive the multidimensional support that they need in light of their injuries. This commitment to victim assistance is emphasized in the Mine Ban Treaty, which requires that parties to the treaty provide support to mine victims. However, since these individuals are often viewed by their governments as part of the broad category of "disabled", they struggle to receive situation-specific assistance. Some forms of victim assistance that the committee should consider include:

- Medical care for the physical injury
- Long-term physical therapy once the individual leaves the hospital
- Psychological support
- Economic reintegration support i.e. adaptation to employment

Advocacy

Mine action advocacy consists of encouraging member states to ratify and enforce international treaties related to land mines, particularly the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Conventional Weapons, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. While UNMAS coordinates advocacy activities, different UN bodies bring up the concerns of different groups; for instance, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights focuses on victim assistance because of its emphasis on the rights of the disabled.

Several non-UN groups also partake in advocacy activities, including the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Geneva Call, a group that pressures non-state actors to adhere to international land mine standards.

Stockpile Destruction

Since the number of mines held in member state stockpiles is far greater the amount actually found in minefields, stockpile destruction is critical to mine action. There are several different ways of disassembling and destroying a landmine. The various technical processes can be easily described, but the key is that some

methods are labor-intensive (like manual disassembly and rotary kiln incineration) while others require less labor but some advanced technologies (cryofracture, laser cutting, plasma arc, "Silver 2" oxidation process). In either case, obtaining the resources for stockpile destruction can be difficult for smaller member states.

Issues to Consider

Medical Concerns

Because of their injuries, landmine victims become a significant strain on the healthcare system. Since landmines are found disproportionately in impoverished regions, it is difficult for the injured to receive care; the World Health Organization estimates that just a quarter of mine-related amputees receive proper medical care. In these countries, rehabilitation services are even harder to find than hospitals, meaning that victims continue to struggle once they leave the hospital. This part of mine action is often overlooked; delegates should seek to include mine victim assistance in their resolutions.

Economic Impact

As one of the factors of production, land is a crucial resource in any economy. In rural, low-income regions where agriculture is the driver of the local economy, land is even more important. As a result, the presence of land mines can irreparably damage a local economy and hurt the country's food production. By one estimate, Cambodia would be able to produce 135% more food if its arable land was not covered in mines. Consider whether or not affected countries deserve aid to alleviate their food production and economic struggles.

Effectiveness of the United Nations

Think about how the UN can maximize its impact in mine action despite the limitations of national sovereignty. Member states are free to choose whether to ratify a treaty or not. Even if they do, the UN cannot carry out the actual removal of mines—that responsibility lies with national governments. Also consider how the UN

should deal with non-state actors, including terrorist organizations that use mines.

Questions to Answer when Identifying Country Policy:

1. Are land mines prevalent in your country?
    a. If so, what actions has your country taken to address them?
    b. If not, has your country provided any type of international support for mine action?
2. Has your country acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty and other international agreements pertaining to mine action? Why/why not?

Questions to Consider in a Resolution:

1. Should universal ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty be encouraged? Should any changes be made?
2. How should national mine action capabilities be developed?
3. From where can funding for mine action be secured, on a national and international basis?
4. What resources can the UN and member states provide for the victims of land mines?
5. What aid should be provided to countries that are economically affected by land mines?
6. Are there any new technologies that should be promoted in mine action pursuits?
7. How should the UN respond to the use of land mines by non-state actors?

Sources Consulted (feel free to use these in your research as well):

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Topic B:

Introduction:

Peacekeeping troops are perhaps the most potent tool that the United Nations possesses to promote and maintain peace. In contrast with the conventions, peace talks, and other forms of dialogue that usually take place in New York or Geneva, the deployment of peacekeeping forces (a combination of military forces from many different member states) allows the United Nations to establish a physical presence in a conflict-torn region and provide

direct support to citizens and governments. In that respect,

peacekeepers often serve as a superior option to the stabilizing presence of a foreign military, since UN forces have (in theory) no competing national interests. Peacekeepers follow three basic principles:

- Consent of the parties
- Impartiality
- Non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate

Past peacekeeping operations include roles in crucial conflicts like the 1994 Rwandan Genocide; today, peacekeepers serve in 16 different operations worldwide.

As members of SPECPOL, delegates will be tasked with a review of the operations of peacekeepers in South Sudan, formally known as UNMISS (the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan).

A Brief History of South Sudan

Following a January 2011 referendum in which 98% of citizens voted to separate from the Sudanese government in Khartoum, South Sudan achieved full independence on July 9th, 2011. On July 14th, they became the newest member state of the United Nations.

From the beginning, the country faced significant challenges to its economic and political stability. The region's economy

is heavily dependent on oil; crude exports account for 80% of South Sudanese GDP and 98% of fiscal revenues.

However, since independence a combination of internal political conflict and disagreement with the government of Sudan over the sharing of oil revenues slowed oil production significantly.

Seemingly unable to catch a break, the fledgling country descended into civil war in late 2013. On December 15th, a coup d'état was attempted by former Vice President Riek Machar to overthrow the government of President Salva Kiir. Machar accused Kiir of seeking to dismiss his cabinet and establish an authoritarian regime. The attempted coup led to the division of the ruling Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) into the SPLM-Juba, led by Kiir, and the SPLM In Opposition (SPLM-IO), led by Machar.

The conflict is estimated to have killed over 10,000 people on both sides and to have displaced more than 1 million people out of a population of 9 million, sparking a humanitarian crisis.

It has complicated UNMISS's task since the peacekeepers cannot simultaneously focus on providing aid to citizens in need and on strengthening the legitimacy of the SPLM-Juba government. In any case, the need for support is severe; a UN study found widespread evidence of ethnic killings, murder of civilians, rape, and other systematic violations of South Sudanese human rights. Sustained ethnic conflict also remains a possibility due to the boiling-over of tensions between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups that populate the region.

Mediation efforts initiated by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional body, led to the signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in January. However, a blueprint for implementing the Agreement was not approved by the two sides until August, extending the conflict and humanitarian crisis. In late September, the two sides agreed on the terms of a transitional unity

government, but the situation on the ground has barely changed.

The United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

UNMISS was formally established in July 2011 through the Security Council Resolution 1996. According to the mission's website, its original mandate was "to support the Government in peace consolidation and thereby fostering longer-term state building and economic development; assist the Government in exercising its responsibilities for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution and protect civilians; and help the authorities in developing capacity to provide security, establishing the rule of law, and strengthening the security and justice sectors in the country" (www.un.org).

Essentially, UNMISS was initially tasked with helping the South Sudanese government maintain stability in its first years of independence. However, this role shifted dramatically following the outbreak of violence in December 2013. In resolutions 2132 and 2155, the Security Council voted to temporarily and then permanently increase the number of military personnel from 7,000 to 12,500. Furthermore, the primary goal of UN operations was shifted from nation-building to humanitarian assistance; UNMISS' focus is now on aiding the people of South Sudan as opposed to supporting their government.

Issues to Consider

Attacks on UNMISS Forces:

UNMISS forces have been the subject of several violent attacks in South Sudan. The most significant came in April, when a group of armed youths attacked a UN base in the town of Bor that was sheltering around 5,000 civilians. 58 people were killed in the attack, 48 of which were civilians.

Security at UN bases has been increased since the attack, but the reality is that UN peacekeepers risk their lives on a daily basis. Attacks on peacekeepers can

often be more deadly that similar attacks on national armies, since peacekeepers are limited to using force in cases of self-defense. The committee should consider what measures should be taken to improve the safety of UN peacekeepers. Some advocate the designation of attacks on peacekeepers as war crimes; others support the expansion of peacekeepers' abilities to use force to dispel conflict.

The Current Mandate

The primary focus of this topic is for SPECPOL to evaluate UNMISS in the context of its current mandate and identify ways for peacekeepers to fulfill their responsibilities more effectively. Delegates should have a thorough understanding of the UNMISS mandate and should identify creative ways of improving its implementation. The current mandate, outlined by Security Council resolution 2155, consists of four main responsibilities, outlined below.

Protection of Civilians

UNMISS is tasked with:

- Safeguarding civilians from physical violence wherever it is deployed, with particular emphasis on the protection of women and children
- Proactively deterring attacks on civilians by actively patrolling refugee camps, protection sites, and other high-risk areas; this includes protecting crucial social and economic infrastructure, including schools, places of worship, hospitals, and oilfields
- Facilitating reconciliation between clashing ethnic groups (in this case, the Nuer and Dinka peoples) in the interest of long-term peace
- Supporting the eventual return of internally displaced persons (IDPs)

and refugees to their homes once stability can be ensured

Monitoring and Investigating Human Rights

UNMISS's primary responsibilities here is to investigate and publicly report violations of human rights that occur in the region. In particular, UNMISS is supposed to focus on potential war crimes and/or crimes against humanity, as well as on violations of the rights of women and children i.e. rape, child abuse, etc. In this respect, the peacekeepers are also tasked with supporting the African Union's Commission of Inquiry for South Sudan, an ongoing regional investigation into human rights violations during the conflict.

Creating the Conditions for Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance

Since the outbreak of conflict, it has been extraordinarily difficult to bring necessary humanitarian assistance to the people of South Sudan. UNMISS therefore provides security and transportation to relief personnel operating in the country, including representatives of the UNDP and other aid organizations. These actions allow for more effective delivery of humanitarian aid within the country.

Supporting the Implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

This part of the UNMISS mandate involves direct interaction with the SPLM government and the rebels. The Cessation of Hostilities agreement signed in January by both parties required them to cease military actions, refrain from attacking civilians, and allow humanitarian assistance to reach the South Sudanese people. UNMISS is essentially tasked with watching over the two parties and ensuring that they follow the terms of their prior agreement.

<u>Questions to Answer when Formulating Policy:</u>

1. How has your country voted on General Assembly and/or Security

Council resolutions regarding South Sudan?

2. How many troops does your country contribute to UNMISS?
3. Has your country participated in any mediation efforts during the current conflict?

Questions to Consider in a Resolution:

1. Is UNMISS necessary to maintain stability in South Sudan? Should troop levels and/or funding be increased/decreased?
2. Should UNMISS take any new actions, humanitarian or military, to better the wellbeing of the South Sudanese people?
3. In what ways should member states, UN subsidiaries, NGOs, and other interested parties interact with UNMISS to provide aid to South Sudanese citizens?
4. How can UNMISS help improve the relationship of South Sudan with Sudan?
5. To what extent should UNMISS support the ruling South Sudanese government?
6. What should the timeline be for the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops from South Sudan?
7. How can the safety of UNMISS peacekeepers be ensured?
8. What specific new activities should UNMISS carry out in order to fulfill its mandate?

Sources Consulted (feel free to use these in your research):

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- http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/south-sudans-

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