Disarmament Committee

Implementing measures to safely administer the elimination of explosive remnants of war

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Introduction

Explosive weapons exist since the 9th century, and were discovered by Taoist Chinese alchemists who stumbled upon the invention of gunpowder. In 1161, the Chinese used gunpowder in warfare, to scare of the enemy. It was the first explosive weapon, however major problems linked to explosive remnants only appeared during the XXth century. The first World War brought explosives with the emergence of TNT in artillery shells. The second World War broaden the use of explosives in warfare, using new explosives that had never seen before. Despite this technical achievement, explosives were not a fully controlled type of ordnance, and still are not to this day.This has therefore resulted in unexploded ordnance.

Explosive remnants of war, which consist of unexploded ordnance, as well as abandoned ordnance, are a crucial problem in today's world. Especially as the past century has been the deadliest century due to the rise of uncharted weapons used in wars. The elimination of explosive remnants of war is a necessity as these have particularly severe consequences for civilians, especially children, first. Moreover, due to their delayed detonation, explosive remnants of war can be a cause for conflict between countries years after their initial use.

Definition of Key Terms

Safe administration

Safe administration is a secure way of securing, supervising and organising a certain situation.

Explosive remnants of war (ERW)

Explosive remnants of war are any sort of explosive munitions left behind after a conflict. These munitions range from grenades, cluster munitions, mortars to unexploded shells, bombs, and rockets. Explosive remnants are considered to be unexploded ordnance, and abandoned explosive ordnance.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO)

Unexploded ordnance are weapons such as grenades, bombs, shells, cluster munition, that have failed to detonate, and therefore still present a risk of detonation after the end of the conflict.

Abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO)

Abandoned explosive ordnance is any sort of explosive military equipment that has not been used, that has been left behind, and which is no longer under control of a belligerent party that left it behind. This abandoned equipment might have been primed, fuzed, armed or otherwise prepared for use.

General Overview

The uncertainty of war

Multiple causes lead to the necessity of eliminating explosive war remnants, it is therefore mandatory to fully understand them, so as to find ways to safely administer the elimination of explosive war remnants. Armed conflicts between different groups are not always foreseeable, thus there is always uncertainty in a conflict. Even in major wars like the Second World War, the enemy is often considered unpredictable. Thus, the sudden movement of the enemy's troops, forces the fleeing troops to leave some of their weapons behind for the sake of survival. As this equipment is no longer under control of the troops it is considered to be abandoned explosive ordnance. In some cases, as armed groups are forced to retreat they decide to leave behind explosives such as mines to burden, and undermine the opponent. The above situations are the most common cases of abandoned explosive ordnance. That being said explosive remnants of war can also be caused by unexploded ordnance.

Faulty ordnance

Indeed, faulty ordnance is a major cause of explosive war remnants. Throughout recent history we have numerous examples of bombs or other explosives that have detonated later than they were supposed to. However, the most significant example is the bombs that rained down from the West European skies during World War II. Of the 3.4 million tons of bombs dropped by the allies, not all exploded. Thus, those that did not instantaneously explode, acted as an equivalent of mines killing civilians during and after the War. This is the main risk of unexploded ordnance, it strikes one when least expected, furthermore, these explosives can detonate after peace has been reached between the different groups. In 2019 bombs from the Second World War are still being found in parts of Europe such as Germany. Often these explosives have never been noticed as the people of their respective countries have rebuilt everything from the ground up over the debris where these bombs lie.

Difficulties of safely administering

War Zones,

The importance of safely administering the elimination of explosive remnants of war is due to our failure to do so in a sustainable manner throughout the world and previous war zones. It is necessary to ensure safety and stability to those who have already endured war, a way of doing that is by safely administering the elimination of explosive remnants. However, to do this we face a number of difficulties and challenges. One of those challenges is access to the places affected by explosive remnants, in many cases even after the conflict the affected region is still very unstable. Thus, making it hard to send qualified people to eliminate the explosive remnants in places where their lives are in danger. Furthermore, the abandoned explosive ordnance, like mines are making the elimination of all the explosive remnants harder for the state in charge of it or the third party willing to do the job.

Unstable states, financial distress

In addition of a compromised access to regions affected by explosive remnants of war, those regions often find themselves in a critical financial as well as political place in their history. Indeed, often when states are aware of the presence of explosive remnants on their territory they express the necessity to eliminate them. However since they were recently involved in an armed conflict they do not find themselves in a prosperous place where significant amounts of money can be allocated to this type of issues. Prices of personal mines go as low as 1 USD to make, but at least 1000 USD to later on clear the mine.

Nonetheless, regions who have a state that expresses the willingness to eliminate explosive remnants of war, are far more advanced in solving this issue than countries or regions who do not have a functional government or leading party. For example, after the death of the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011, the Libyan state struggled to find a representative recognized by the people, thus making it difficult to safely administer the elimination of explosive remnants of war.

Post war discoveries of explosive remnants

Another complication is that we often do not know where these explosive remnants are. Whether it is abandoned ordonnance or unexploded ordonnance, after a while people forget of their presence leading up to a lot of deadly injuries. A lot of explosive remnants are found inentiationally years after the war. For example, a bomb from World War II was found in the French capital, Paris the 4th of February 2019. Even though the bombs from that time period rarely explode during the process of defusing them, there still is a substantial risk of explosion.

Major Parties Involved

Myanmar

The army of Myanmar also known as ; Tatmadaw, as well as other armed groups have been using a lot of anti-personnel mines. It is very common for these mines to injure and kill civilians. This ongoing problem in Myanmar is partially due to Myanmar not acceding to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban, as well as the absence of a state run mine comprehension system to educate its people on the surrounding life threatening danger. In 2018 the States of Kachin, Chan, and Kayin remain heavily infested by mines, and over 51,000 people live in mine infested areas.

Iraq,

Unexploded ordnance and abandoned ordnance are a major problem in Iraq. Iraq has explosive remnants of war from different wars, some are from the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), others are from the Gulf War (1990-1991), and finally other remnants come from the Iraq Civil War (2003-2011). In 2003 the US and the British dropped millions of cluster bomb munitions. However, 30% of those did not explode still presenting a risk to any civilian to this day. This unexploded ordnance is being found in cities as well as rural areas, thus the

farmers are scared to work on their land. This rational fear is not only due to the unexploded bombs, but also the numerous mines that lay around in Iraq. These landmines are mainly in rural areas with framlands, thus their presence are a huge burden for the national economy of Iraq.

Rwanda

On the evening of the 6th of April 1994, the airplane carrying 9 passengers and 3 crew members was shot down by two surface-to-air missiles. This plane carried the rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana, and the burundian president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, as well as other diplomats. The 12 people on board this plane all died. This crash is remembered as the trigger of the rwandan genocïde. However, the ones who shot down the plane remain unidentified, all we know is that the missiles they used were SA-16, also known as, Igla-1E. These were missiles produced in Russia, some sources say that the same kind of missiles were sold by arm dealers from Ex-yugoslavia, early 1994 to african groups. Some suspect these missile launchers to come from Ex-yugoslavia, where they were left behind during the conflict.

Russian Federation / Ukraine

The 17th of July the malaysian airlines flight MH17 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down over Ukraine. This passenger plane carrying 283 passengers and 15 crew members, was shot down by a soviet mobile BUK surface-to-air missile launcher, presumably by separatist forces in. This is linked to the explosive remnants of war because the separatists were able to find this missile launcher left behind by the Russians. This example shows the importance of eliminating explosive remnants of war by showing us the risk of the ordnance falling into the hands of the wrong people, if not eliminated fast enough.

ICRC

The ICRC is the International Committee of the Red Cross, also known under its french name CICR. The ICRC plays a leading role in the promotion and the development of law regulating certain weapons, in order to apply the International humanitarian law (IHL). The IHL Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) of 1980 prohibits the use of certain weapons, in particular the use of munitions that use fragments not detectable by X-ray and blinding laser weapons. At a later date, amended on the same convention in 1997, all anti-personnel mines are prohibited. Hereby the number of mines was drastically reduced, thereby the number of casualties dropped too.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
2nnd September 1945	World War II saw an amount of explosives that had never been seen before. Unexploded ordnance from this war are still being found all over the world but especially western Europe.
17th April 1975	By the end of the Cambodian Civil War, Cambodia became the country with the largest area contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war.
October 10th 1980	The International Humanitarian Law Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons prohibits the use of certain weapons, in particular the use of munitions that use fragments not detectable by X-ray and blinding laser weapons. This convention is the first treaty establishing a framework regarding post-conflict hazards such as unexploded and abandoned ordnance.

At this same convention, it has been declared that when active hostilities have ended the belligerents must clear the areas under their control from explosive remnants of war. This decision has been made to ensure the safety of civilians after the end of hostilities. |
June 4th 1997	The IHL Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons prohibits the use of anti-personnel mines.
December 31st 2003	British and American have dropped millions of cluster bomb munitions over Iraq, 30 % of which did not explode leading up to countless unexploded ordnance.
2015	In 2015 the Vietnamese State declared the presence of 800,000 tons of unexploded ordnance on its soil. Furthermore, between 1975 and 2015 100,000 people were either killed or injured by unexploded remnants of war in Vietnam.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Assistance in mine action, 7 December 2017, (A/RES/72/75-EN)

- Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, 4 December 2017, (A/RES/70/71-EN)

- Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, 7 December 2015, (A/RES/70/71-EN)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The United nations are well aware of the risk and dangers linked to explosive remnants of war, and have been working on reducing those risks. Multiple resolutions passed on this subject in both the General Assembly, as well as the Security Council. However, attempts to solve this issue remain very broad. The United Nations worked on improving communication, and cooperation on an international, regional and sub regional level in order to locate explosive remnants of war in a more efficient manner. Furthermore, all member states of recognized the economic losses linked to mines and explosive remnants of war, hereby establishing a consensus. The United Nations is also actively working on reviewing and banning weapons that are considered to be "inhumane". This way the United Nations have prohibited the use of anti-personnel mines, as the main victims were civilian children.

Possible Solutions

Urging every country that is not yet adhering to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to do so as soon as possible. This is mandatory as it tackles the problem of eliminating explosive remnants of war before hand. This measure would reduce many challenges we are facing with the elimination of explosive remnants today. For example, this would allow us to get rid of anti-personnel mines, which could significantly aid countries like Myanmar.

As we can see with countries like Iraq that have to face various problems linked to unexploded ordnance and abandoned ordnance, a new system is needed to eliminate the explosive remnants of war. A new system is necessary, because as we can see with several countries, those that are heavily affected by explosive remnants in terms of deaths are countries who do not have the financial means to eliminate explosive remnants of war. We have to recall that the cheapest way to safely dismantle a mine costs approximately a

thousand USD. A new UN based system would allow for a new division of experts to go and dismantle explosive remnants of war, this system would take a burden off the back of struggling countries.

However, for this UN based system to be in place, the safety of the experts dismantling the explosive remnants needs to be guaranteed. That is why before the team of experts will be sent to any given country, the United Nations will review the safety of that given country, and ensure the absence of armed conflict while the team of experts is deployed. Regions of the world currently implicated in an armed conflict will unfortunately not be able to benefit from this new system.

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Appendix or Appendices

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