



# AUSTRALIA



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## **UNSC ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING PROTECTING THE PEACEKEEPER: SUPPRESSING THE DEPLOYMENT OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES AGAINST PEACE OPERATIONS**

26 March 2021

**Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield,  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the  
United Nations**

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Thank you to Kenya and the many co-hosts for convening this Arria formula meeting today.

Australia remains gravely concerned by the increasing prevalence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in peacekeeping settings. The indiscriminate use of IEDs, including in complex attacks on peacekeeping personnel and infrastructure, poses a serious threat to safety and security. It also hinders the ability of missions to achieve their mandates and reduces access to political participation, detracting from efforts to find peace and stability.

Civilians also continue to face devastating impacts from the use of IEDs – causing death and disability and limiting access to education and healthcare. These impacts have been felt even more sharply in the context of the pandemic.

For Australia, our operational experiences have made us keenly aware of the physical and mental health impacts of IEDs on victims and their communities. These operational experiences also inform Australia's sponsorship – with Afghanistan and France – of the regular General Assembly resolution *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices*.

Too often, peacekeeping missions with an IED threat are not adequately equipped with the capabilities and expertise needed to mitigate that threat. For this reason, we must continue to employ new technologies, apply a gender-sensitive approach and strengthen peacekeeping intelligence, to prevent and respond to the use of IEDs.

Australia is proud of our ongoing partnership with the UN Mine Action Services (UNMAS), and I want to recognize the critical work it does in both peacekeeping and humanitarian contexts.

Since 2019 Australia has provided over \$25m (AUD) to mine action projects with UNMAS and other partners. We supported the development of the UN's first IED Disposal Standards in 2018 – an important step towards a common understanding of requirements in the field. Australia also supported the development and translation of UN guidelines on gender in mine action, and monitoring and evaluation tools.

Since 2019, Australia has also provided funding to the development of an IED-Threat Mitigation Advisory Team (TMAT). This team is designed to

strengthen the capacity of peacekeeping missions to detect and rapidly respond to IEDs, particularly in Mali and Somalia. We are encouraged by recent progress in Mali, where the percentage of IEDs detected and cleared by UN peacekeepers has steadily increased in recent years.

In closing, colleagues, Australia remains strongly committed to countering the threat posed by IEDs. We reiterate the importance of holding to account perpetrators of attacks and bringing them to justice. As asymmetric threats grow, we must continue to improve the tools and capabilities available to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and the civilians they are mandated to protect.

Thank you.

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