Afghanistan’s views pursuant to the operative paragraph 30th of the General Assembly resolution 73/67 on “Countering the Threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

IEDs in Afghanistan (Overview and Trends):

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) still present an actual, daily and deadly threat to the government forces and civilians in Afghanistan. Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Al-Qaida, ISKP and other terrorist groups extensively and disproportionately use IEDs in the asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan. These groups deliberately and indiscriminately target civilian gatherings including women, children, religious and ethnic minorities. Taliban have also undertaken large complex attacks, using IEDs, to pursue their demands on the negotiation table. IEDs attack goes far beyond killing and maiming. It spreads fear and intimidation, damages infrastructure, causes psychological harms and undermines social cohesion. By employing IEDs, Taliban and other terrorist groups undertake complex attacks on various military and civilian targets.

Use of IEDs in Afghanistan continues to evolve in terms of their manufacturing methods as well as their deployment tactics. Various forms of IEDs which have been in used in attacks in Afghanistan include pressure plate/victim activated IEDs, remote control/radio/command-operated IEDs, magnetic IEDs, suicide IEDs as well as other complex attacks. They are used indiscriminately in populated and urban areas of Afghanistan. In majority of these terrorist attacks, IEDs have been used to start off the attack in the Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) or suicide attacks IED forms. IEDs have been used to mine the areas and roads to restrict government’s access to certain remote areas. Unfortunately, many civilians have been the victims in these IEDs contaminated areas across Afghanistan.

Use of magnetic IEDs targeting mostly vehicles of government officials, politicians and parliamentarians has been on the rise. UNAMA has cited that the use of magnetic IEDs and remote controlled IEDs increased in 2019, causing 48 per cent and 38 per cent more civilian casualties than in 2018, respectively. Significant amount of chemical precursors and fertilizers such as Ammonium Nitrite, potassium chloride, RDX, water gel, C4, and TNT together with commercial explosives and detonators have been used in manufacturing majority of the IEDs used in Afghanistan. These dual used materials and chemical fertilizers, their movements and diversion in the region and, cheap and easy
access of terrorist groups to these materials, continue to be of grave concern to the government of Afghanistan.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has striven to curb the IEDs manufacturing and use in Afghanistan. The steps taken have focused on the prevention of import of these dual used materials, curbing the diversion of commercial explosives, detonators and detonator cords into the wrong hands, enforcing end user regulations, providing C-IED trainings, deploying C-IED units throughout the ranks of military personnel and raising public awareness.

Despite tremendous efforts of the government, ease of access to and diversion of chemical precursors and fertilizers in the region and their dual use; wide access to commercial explosives; lack of effective monitoring and tracking mechanisms, availability of IEDs manufacturing techniques and tactics in the dark web; porous borders and lack of cooperation between states; and last but not least the plausible deniability that states can claim due to the dual nature of chemical fertilizers and due to the economic benefits from these chemical fertilizers, continue to cause increased number of IEDs attacks and civilian and military causalities in Afghanistan. UNAMA cited that in 2018 all types of IEDs attacks caused 4627 civilian casualties (1,361 deaths and 3,266 injured) and in 2019, 4,336 civilian casualties (885 killed and 3,451 injured). While IEDs attacks contribute to 42 per cent of all civilian casualties in both 2018 and 2019 with reference to UNAMA documentations, governmental Statistics shows an increase in IEDs attacks by 25 per cent in 2019 than in 2018 (2001 incidents in 2019 and 1512 incidents in 2018).

**Counter IEDs efforts in Afghanistan:**

The government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has taken a number of measures in order to counter/mitigate the threat posed by IEDs. These measures include, but not limited to, as follows:

- Procurement, supply, import, production, transportation, use, and trade of Ammonium Nitrite and 14 other fertilizers which can be used to manufacture IEDs in Afghanistan continue to be banned based on a Presidential decree since 2012.
- Measures and guidelines have been adopted to detect and seize shipments of these dual used materials at the border and custom points.
- Interagency coordination has been strengthened between relevant agencies responsible for implementation of the C-IED National Strategy (2012) and C-IED efforts.
- The number of C-IEDs teams in the framework of Ministry of Interior (MoI) increased from 112 to 160 and these unites have been deployed to police headquarters, Special Force Units, Public Safety Units, and Border Police Headquarters throughout the country.
- Various C-IED capacity building and training programs have been conducted for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces including on detection and defusing IEDs.
- Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) and IEDs Disposal (IEDD) training centers have been further strengthened. 95 training workshops have been held by these centers and 3500 officers have been graduated from these centers so far. These workshops used to be held abroad but now the government has the ability to conduct such trainings inside Afghanistan.

As results of these efforts, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces have been able to neutralize/defuse 64195 IEDs and seize 329031 kilogram improvised explosives, 120 Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED), 433 suicide vests, and 227292 kilogram Ammonium Nitrate in 2018-2020 time interval. Furthermore, in this period 129 IEDs depots and 56 IEDs manufacturing factories have been seized and destructed.

The Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) has also defused 789 pressure plate IEDs in 8 square kilometer contaminated area in Helmand, Ghazni, Kandahar, Takhar, Kunduz, and Ghor provinces. According to surveys carried out, 101 square kilometer contaminated areas of pressure plate IEDs have been mapped and the clearance operation will be conducted in near future.

**Recommendations:**

Victims of IEDs’ deliberate attacks are mostly civilians in Afghanistan including students, players and spectators at cricket and wrestling matches, worshippers at mosques, humanitarian aid workers, education officials, civilian government staff providing essential services, as well as civilians seeking to access those government services, medical personnel, journalists, election workers, and men and women attempting to participate in the electoral process. Given the magnitude of the problem as well as the grave impacts of IEDs, the International
community needs to develop an effective and coordinated response to counter/mitigate the IEDs impacts globally. As the most affected country by IEDs, Afghanistan recommends the followings:

1) International and binding regulatory framework needs to be developed to regulate precursor materials such as dual used fertilizers, commercial explosives, detonators and etc in order to curb diversion of these materials into the wrong hands including by putting in place end users and Know Your Customer regulations. Commercial sectors can play a vital role in developing such a framework. This framework shall also oblige producers to develop innovative ways to ensure their products will not be used for constructing IEDs. Reaching a threshold of percentage and amount in enrichment and trade of precursors, internationally and regionally, will be a significant step in countering IEDs.

2) States shall develop due diligence procedures for the export of precursor materials and commercial explosives particularly to the conflict zones and affected countries.

3) Strict monitoring mechanisms shall be developed and put in place for the movement, intra- and inter-states, of dual use precursors, detonators and commercial explosives. Provision of assistance to the most affected countries especially for the customs and law enforcement agencies including through programs such as Global Shield or CHASE is crucial in this regard.

4) Given the evolving nature of IEDs, information sharing and sharing of experiences and best practices are of paramount importance. Establishing smooth and credible mechanisms where states can confidently share such information is critical in promoting and synergizing counter efforts globally.
The tactics used by governments to combat Command Operated IEDs, Victim Operated IEDs, Suicide IEDs, and VBIEDs should vary in terms of techniques and manner of neutralization. Tackling each type of IEDs should have peculiar directives and situational manuals. States should share their expertise regarding directives and manuals through bilateral and multilateral platforms.

5) Technical, financial and material assistance and capacity building to the most affected countries are essential in enabling states’ response to IEDs.
Establishing a trust fund or a body which can mobilize and coordinate such assistance in an effective and coherent manner will help in consolidating the international response to this phenomenon. States and international organizations that have technological capabilities can play an important role in this regard.

6) Establishing a mechanism for supporting victims of IEDs is crucial.

7) A Global C-IEDs Virtual Asset Platform that restricts chases, recognizes and de-connects virtually the efforts of spiteful elements in dark web would be helpful in countering IED’s manufacturing, use and tactics of internet based knowledge sharing and proliferation.