

NOTES FROM UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION SERVICE

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) serves as the focal point for all U.N. mine-related activities carried out by 11 departments and agencies within the organization. This coordinated and proactive approach minimizes the potential for duplication of effort, and ensures clear delineation of responsibility and integration of work by all involved. To fully address the needs and objectives of U.N. mine action, UNMAS is responsible for the coordination of:

- Mine action policy development and coordination;
- Assessment and monitoring of the global landmine threat;
- Mine action program initiation and support;
- Information management;
- Quality management and technology issues;
- Advocacy and consciousness-raising; and
- Resource mobilization.

Policy Development and Coordination

As focal point, UNMAS develops policy to guide the cooperative efforts of all those involved in U.N. mine action in support of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. *Mine Action and Effective Coordination: The United Nations Policy* was developed in close consultation with other partners in 1998 to clarify the key principles on which mine action is based, and to identify roles and responsibilities within the United Nations for all mine action activities.

UNMAS has continued to develop further guidelines to augment this policy, including a 1999 paper on cooperation with indigenous militaries, which establishes the range of assistance to military involvement in mine action, and emphasizes the key principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity. Other guidelines are also under development in close cooperation with U.N. agencies and departments and other key entities.

UNMAS also chairs an inter-agency consultative and priority-setting mechanism within the United Nations, and an additional forum involving key NGO and international organizations.

Landmine Threat Assessment and Monitoring

UNMAS assesses and monitors the global landmine threat in order to identify needs and develop appropriate responses. Inter-agency and multi-sectoral assessment

missions are deployed to affected regions to define the scope and nature of the landmine/UXO problem, identify constraints and opportunities affecting the mine action response, and formulate recommendations for mine action activities. Thus far, 15 such missions have been deployed. Depending on the situation, Level 1 Impact Surveys are often developed as a follow-up to such assessment missions, with the information gathered being used to determine priorities and identify areas with the greatest needs. Impact Surveys identify the general location of known and suspected mined areas, and focus on the evaluation of the humanitarian and socioeconomic impact of landmine contamination.

Program Initiation and Support

In keeping with the U.N. mine action policy, responsibility for supporting long-term integrated mine-action programs rests with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), where UNMAS remains involved in an advisory and monitoring capacity. In the context of humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations, the involvement of UNMAS is more critical and direct. It is responsible for the planning, establishment and coordination of deploying mine action operations, as well as their support. The most significant ongoing programs implemented under UNMAS auspices include Kosovo (FRY), southern Lebanon, and the program in the Temporary Security Zone between Eritrea and Ethiopia. UNMAS is also responsible for supporting the effective integration of mine awareness and victim assistance activities with other mine-related activities.

Information Management

Given the scope of the landmine problem, the wide spectrum of factors to take into consideration and the number of actors involved, the development of an appropriate information management system has been identified as a priority to support proper monitoring, planning and program implementation. As a result, UNMAS has asked the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to develop the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Thus far a "field module" has been developed and has been deployed in a growing number of countries, while the second phase—developing a "global module," as well as improving the existing



version of the field module—continues.

Additional initiatives are also being continued with regard to information management issues, including development of improved electronic mediums for dealing with issues as diverse as donor funding and stockpile destruction, as well as cooperation with other initiatives in areas such as conformity of mine action information databases.

Quality Management and Technology

UNMAS is responsible for the development, maintenance and promotion of technical and safety standards for mine action. As a part of this role, with the support of the GICHD, the International Standards for Mine Clearance Operations have been revised, updated and expanded to become the International Mine Action Standards. Guidelines for mine awareness education have also been formulated by UNICEF, while the public health aspect of victim assistance sees the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the lead within the U.N. system to discuss requirements for additional standards with other actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). With regard to technology, UNMAS has been called upon to take a role through the collection and dissemination of appropriate information, and the development of standards where required and practical.

Advocacy and Consciousness-raising

Advocacy, public information and consciousness-raising activities are integral parts of the international effort to rid the world of landmines, and UNMAS is involved in stigmatising the use of mines and supporting a global ban on these weapons. With over 100 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the emphasis is also shifting from advocacy to supporting treaty implementation, as more countries face the need to implement the obligations of ratification. UNMAS also cooperates with other organizations

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involved in advocacy efforts, and develops publications such as *Landmines* magazine, and other public information items.

Resource Mobilization

The vast majority of U.N. mine-action activities are funded from voluntary donor contributions, so resource mobilization is instrumental to the success of U.N. mine-action endeavours. As U.N. focal point, UNMAS coordinates resource mobilization for the U.N. system and manages the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. Each year a consolidated "Portfolio of Mine-related Projects" is also prepared to outline funding needs, including brief

descriptions and budget requirements for all U.N. mine-action programs and projects, be they implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, or any other U.N. agency or program. UNMAS also confers on an ongoing basis with the donor community to discuss priorities and gaps in funding.

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