

Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine-action programs and operators, creates and disseminates knowledge, works to improve quality management and standards and provides support to instruments of international law.

by Ian Mansfield
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This installment of *Geneva Diary* follows the GICHD and its activities over the past year. Besides organizing both a conference and a workshop for the international mine-action community, the organization has also released two new publications. These publications, which are both filled with a sizeable amount of GICHD-researched data, will hopefully assist deminers in the field and make their areas safer for themselves as well as civilians.

Technology Workshop

The GICHD and the United Nations Mine Action Service co-hosted a technology workshop in Geneva from 8–10 September 2008 (see full article on page 78). This meeting was a follow-up to the one held in February 2006, which recommended that a similar meeting be held every two years. Over 75 people attended the September meeting, representing national mine-action programs, field operators, commercial companies, equipment manufacturers and technology organizations. The major topics discussed were metal detectors, dual sensors and the interference of soil on their performance. The workshop also addressed the operational challenges related to road clearance and land release in a technology context. It provided a forum in which equipment requirements could be expressed and recorded. Challenges and experiences in humanitarian demining techniques from some mine-affected countries were presented, as well as exchanges and shared ideas to improve efficiency. Presentations and film clips used during the proceedings of the meeting can be found at <http://snipurl.com/45sdr>. There is an informal plan to continue holding these workshops every two years, with the next expected in 2010.

Odor-detection Conference

The GICHD organized an international conference, “Odour Detection by Animals: Research and Practice,” held in Os, Norway, in mid-June 2008. Around 120 participants attended including practitioners and experts involved with animal-detector systems particularly those with animal systems for humanitarian demining detection. The purpose of this unique meeting was to encourage those with expertise in this area to share it and to highlight the research findings that are applicable across a range of animal species searching for various target odors. End-users—such as humanitarian-demining administrators, police, customs officials, defense specialists, and search-and-rescue organizations—were also represented. They discussed their practical experiences and contributed views on how animal detector systems can best meet their requirements. The outcomes of this meeting can be found at <http://snipurl.com/45s13>.

New Publications

The GICHD has recently released a number of new publications. These have included *A Guide to Road Clearance*,¹ which aims to contribute to the development of safer, more efficient and cost-effective road-clearance systems by providing recent examples, data and methodologies from the field. Along with the information gathered in this guide, the GICHD has gathered supplementary technical data through visits to road-clearance projects in four countries.

The *Guide to Marking and Fencing in Mine Action Programmes*² has also been developed. Based on research conducted by the GICHD in 10 mine-affected states and territories, this guide describes the extent to which marking and fencing are carried out in existing

mine-action programs. It assesses the impact of different methods of marking and fencing of hazardous areas. It also discusses the contribution of medium- and long-term marking towards casualty reduction in situations where clearance cannot be conducted immediately. ♦

See Endnotes, page 112



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