

# 2007 Marks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mine Action Standards

The International Mine Action Standards are guidelines set by the United Nations to implement mine-action programs safely and effectively. The author discusses the purpose and processes of the IMAS as well as provides various references for those interested in learning more about the IMAS.

by Faiz M. Paktian [ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining ]

**B**ack in March 1997, the United Nations Mine Action Service issued the first edition of international standards for humanitarian mine clearance. These standards have since been expanded to include the other components of mine action and to reflect changes to operational procedures, practises and norms. The original standards were redeveloped and renamed as International Mine Action Standards with the first edition produced in October 2001. Therefore, 2007 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original mine-action standards.

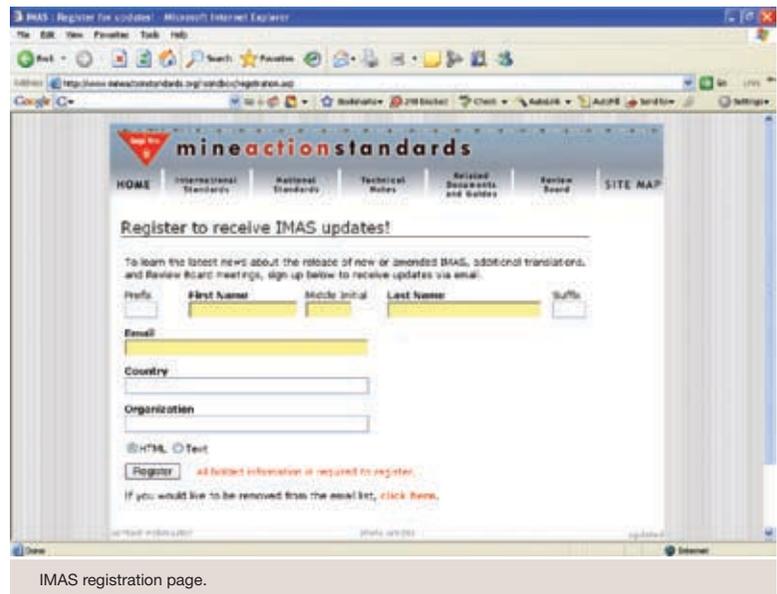
The IMAS are standards the United Nations has issued to guide the planning, implementation and management of mine-action programmes. They have been developed to improve safety, quality and efficiency in mine action. The IMAS follow the International



IMAS homepage.  
All photos courtesy of MAIC



IMAS in Spanish.



IMAS registration page.

Organization for Standardization<sup>1</sup> format and draw on the two main instruments of international law that regulate landmines: the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention<sup>2</sup> and Amended Protocol II and Protocol V<sup>3</sup> to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.<sup>4</sup> The IMAS provide general information on existing regulations and conventions that affect mine action, particularly those referring to international humanitarian law, clearance requirements, hazard marking and general safety issues.

The IMAS are a framework to assist the development of National Mine Action Standards that can more accurately reflect specific local situations in a given country. The IMAS can be adapted as national standards where the United Nations, or another international body, temporarily assumes the responsibility of a mine-action authority. IMAS can also provide the framework for legal contracts between donors and implementing organisations.

There are currently a number of IMAS covering a wide range of issues from establishing to evaluating mine-action programmes. They include not only general guidelines for mine action but also standards for specific field activities such as clearance requirements or marking of hazards in demining operations. New IMAS are produced periodically based on requirements realised either in the field or at the management levels in mine action. The existing IMAS are reviewed every three years and amended or replaced with a new edition as needed.

UNMAS has the mandated responsibility for development and maintenance of the IMAS. The work of preparing, reviewing and revising the IMAS is conducted by technical committees, with the support of international, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining coordinates this process at the request of the United Nations. There is a Review Board of the IMAS that is responsible for overseeing the review and

revision of the IMAS. It is composed of representatives of demining NGOs, national authorities and mine-action centres, commercial demining companies, research and development institutions, donors, the concerned U.N. agencies, and as required, subject specialists. UNMAS chairs the Review Board and the GICHD serves as Secretary to the Board. A higher-level IMAS Steering Group, chaired by the Director of UNMAS with U.N. agency representation from UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Office for Project Services, in addition to the GICHD, oversees the work of the Review Board. It oversees the Review Board's work by providing executive direction, agreeing on the membership of the Review Board, determining the Terms of Reference<sup>5</sup> for the Review Board and endorsing or directing the production of new IMAS.

Since the IMAS are continuously amended and new IMAS are being added, all readers should make sure they have the latest version of them. There are two ways to get an up-to-date version of the IMAS: visit the IMAS Web site at [www.mineactionstandards.org](http://www.mineactionstandards.org) or ask the GICHD for an updated CD-ROM (see contact information below). If you have access to the Internet, we encourage you to visit the IMAS Web site for additional information.

As part of the continuing efforts to ensure accessibility of the Standards to the mine-action community, UNMAS and the GICHD worked with the Web site managers at the Mine Action Information Center to redesign and streamline the site in 2007. In the new design, in addition to the IMAS

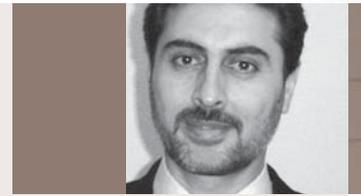
in English, unofficial translations of some IMAS are now available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish for ease of reference. However, for the most up-to-date version, users must refer to the English version.

The Web site also houses and presents a number of National Mine Action Standards—standards produced by the mine-action authority of mine-affected countries that reflect a country's specific situation and are based on the IMAS. These are posted for reference and information to assist the national authorities of those mine-affected countries that have yet to develop their own national standards. If you wish to post your national standards on the IMAS Web site, please send the GICHD an electronic copy of your standards (see contact information below).

An important feature of the new site is that users will have the ability to register for updates at the IMAS Web site. By requesting updates, you will receive an e-mail as soon as a new IMAS, NMAS or Technical Notes for Mine Action is posted on the Web site.

The UNMAS and the GICHD welcome any questions, suggestions or comments about standards or their contributions to the mine-action community (see contact information below). Specialists are available to assist you in understanding the principle of IMAS and NMAS, building structures for NMAS, developing specific standards, reviewing your national standards and providing useful feedback. If you think you need help, please contact UNMAS or GICHD and they will be glad to provide you with appropriate advice. ♦

*See Endnotes, Page*



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## News Brief

### Investment in Cluster-bomb Manufacturers Criminalized

Belgium is the first country to criminalize the investment in companies that make cluster bombs. The Belgian Senate passed legislation in early March to make such investment illegal and the Parliament will publish a list of companies that manufacture cluster bombs. Several Belgian banks terminated their investments in such companies, as the new law prohibits Belgian banks from owning shares in cluster-bomb manufacturers or offering them credit.

More than 40 countries have pledged to develop new international agreements to ban the use of cluster bombs by 2008. Belgium was also the first country to entirely ban cluster munitions, which at least 23 countries have used.