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UNMAS/GICHD Technology Workshop

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Presentation Highlights

Workshop presentations ranged from an explanation of the International Mine Action Standards and the importance of standardization, to a discussion of how to support and encourage domestic production of cleared land for use in commercial and industrial development. One of the first presentations set the tone for creative thinking on the future of technology applications in mine action. The theme of day two was "Survey and Mechanical Demining," and the presentations discussed topics regarding the implications of technology in mine action. The presentations discussed how technology is not just comprised of new products, but also innovations in traditional processes. For example, Pavković highlighted the Croatian Mine Action Center's current use of technology and how it continues to improve. A final outcome of the workshop was the chance to learn from one another - both about what tools are currently being used and about the resources that exist to support the research and development sector of the mine-action community. Some of the resources highlighted at the workshop included the GICHD Technology Workshop Agreements, the ITEP Web site, the UNMAS-supported online lessons-learned repository available through the Mine Action Information Center, the UNMAS/GICHD Technology newsletter, and the journal of ERW and Mine Action's R&D sections. Participants seemed grateful to know that there are multiple resources available to support technology development.

Outcomes

Land release and Technical Survey were seen as central themes of the workshop, yet definitive conclusions were not made as far as where these areas of mine action are headed, and additional discussions within the broader community on these subjects would likely yield more concrete outcome. The discussion centered on how technology is applicable to the land-release concept generated great interest, so this is obviously an important topic for practitioners to consider as mine action continues to evolve and mature.

Break-out Sessions

For the workshop, a total of 28 presentations were made by participants on a wide variety of topics. An interesting trend was the increased prevalence of improvised explosive devices and the use of robots in this sector of the mine-action community. Some of the resources highlighted at the workshop included the GICHD Technology Workshop Agreements, the ITEP Web site, the UNMAS-supported online lessons-learned repository available through the Mine Action Information Center, the UNMAS/GICHD Technology newsletter, and the journal of ERW and Mine Action's R&D sections. Participants seemed grateful to know that there are multiple resources available to support technology development.

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Conclusion

Overall, the Technology Workshop was seen by both participants and organizers as a useful gathering, and most expressed interest in meeting again. It is considered a great deal of interest in holding additional meetings in the future, perhaps more frequently. UNMAS will plan for a similar workshop for 2010, unless popular demand suggests a meeting in 2009 would be beneficial. Any such future workshop would be a minimum of three days in order to accommodate the discussion on the questionnaire and answer periods, as the participants thought too little time was available for these important topics at the September workshop. Nonetheless, all attendees seemed to leave the meeting with valuable knowledge, having participated in thoughtfully discussed presentations, both in the field and online.