

UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION SERVICE

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was formed in October 1997 to serve as the UN focal point for mine action. UNMAS is responsible for coordinating all aspects of mine action within the UN system, including providing mine action assistance during humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations.

UNMAS works in the following areas:

- Policy development and coordination, which involves the development of guidelines and strategies for all mine-related issues, in consultation with key stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Assessment and monitoring of the landmine/unexploded ordnance (UXO) problem in affected countries and defining the requirement for international assistance. Various types of monitoring and fact-finding missions have been undertaken to support this responsibility.
- Information management through the development of the Electronic Mine Information Network, known as E-MINE (see below), and through support for the continued development of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) by the Geneva International Centre for International Demining (GICHD). This system is in place in a growing number of countries and programs, providing an effective tool to coordinate information about the local, national, and regional landmine problem.
- Quality management and technology through the development, maintenance, and promotion of technical and safety standards for mine action (see International Mine Action Standards below) in partnership with the GICHD.
- Advocacy and convention implementation. UNMAS is an active advocate of both the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention and Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW).
- Resource mobilization. The vast majority of UN mine action activities are funded from voluntary donor contributions. As the focal point for UN mine action, UNMAS coordinates UN resource mobilization efforts and manages the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (VTF). It issues a Portfolio of Mine Related Projects annually, which outlines the broad range of mine action programs and projects supported by the various entities of the United Nations system, and which aims to assist in mobilizing the voluntary contributions required for their successful implementation.

INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION STANDARDS

UNMAS is the office within the United Nations Secretariat responsible for the development and maintenance of International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). These standards establish the principles that should be followed to improve the safety and efficiency of mine action programs. They do not have authority until they are adopted at the country program level. Governments of mine-affected countries can adapt the standards to meet national requirements, rules, and codes of practice. Donors can use the standards as minimum contractual requirements when allocating resources for mine action projects and programs, and the United Nations and NGOs can use the international standards as guidelines for the safe and efficient implementation of mine action in the field.

The first International Standards for Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations were issued by UNMAS on behalf of the United Nations in March 1997. In 1999, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) was commissioned by the United Nations to conduct a review of these standards, taking into account lessons learned and new procedures. The resulting International Mine Action Standards were made available in October 2001. They comply with a number of international regulations, conventions, and treaties, particularly the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention and the Amended Protocol II to the CCW. They will progressively cover areas of mine action not previously addressed such as mine risk education, mechanical clearance, and dog detection of mines.

THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR MINE ACTION AND THE ELECTRONIC MINE INFORMATION NETWORK

Information management is a central aspect of mine action. This is vital because of the broad scope of the landmine problem and the number of issues and organizations involved. UNMAS is responsible for coordinating the collection, analysis, and dissemination of landmine-related information, and for the development of mine action information management systems. It has entered into a collaborative agreement with the GICHD to support this responsibility and to develop an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) designed for programs in the field. Under the arrangement, the GICHD is responsible for the development of the IMSMA software, implementation and training in the field, technical support, and project management. UNMAS is responsible for providing guidance to the Centre for the definition of the overall policy, scope, content, functionality, and deployment requirements of IMSMA.

Another important information management tool is the Electronic Mine Information Network (E-MINE). E-MINE is a public and freely accessible website

found at www.mineaction.org. The site has been designed to support field operations through the dissemination of technical information and documents, as well as global coordination and resource mobilization.

RAPID RESPONSE PLAN

In humanitarian situations and peacekeeping operations, UNMAS is responsible for ensuring that there is a coordinated UN mine action response. This often requires the immediate deployment of personnel, followed by equipment, to ensure that the response is coordinated effectively. UNMAS is developing, in conjunction with other UN agencies, NGOs, and other partners, a Rapid Response Plan, which will meet the requirements of emergency situations, and other scenarios where the rapid deployment of personnel, equipment, and a mine action capacity is required.

COUNTRIES/REGIONS SUPPORTED BY UNMAS

UNMAS cooperates with all UN departments and agencies concerned with humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations, particularly UNDP (UN Development Program), UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), and UNOPS (UN Office for Project Services), and with a number of international and national NGOs specializing in mine action. UNMAS managed, in partnership with UNOPS, the successful program in Kosovo from its initiation in 1999 until its completion in December 2001.

As of January 2003, UNMAS is supporting mine action in: Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, The Temporary Security Zone between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Kosovo (FRY), South Lebanon, Sudan, and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. ©

Source: The U.N. Mine Action Service Webpage at www.mineaction.org.