



One Page Background Brief on Week of Mine Action at UNHQ “More than Mines”

Starting on Monday 30 March in New York and around the world, the 10th observance of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action will kick-off. The Day was declared by the General Assembly in December 2005, and was first observed in 2006.

The theme for 2015 is “More than Mines”, which was chosen to highlight the vast array of explosive threats faced by the United Nations and partners, through a broad range of activities include clearance of explosive hazards, victim assistance, risk awareness, advocacy and capacity development.

Why More than Mines?

Does this mean that landmines are no longer a problem and we can move onto other issues?

Sadly, this is not the case. In fact, a staggering 56 countries and four other territories are mine-affected. And these mines remain deadly - thousands of men, women, boys and girls are killed or injured every year as a result of landmines. It is vital to keep working on removing these deadly weapons and fulfilling the obligations of international law, such as the Mine Ban Treaty.

But landmines are not the only explosive hazards that pose a danger to civilians living in conflict and post-conflict settings; unexploded bombs, grenades, unsecured weapons and ammunition and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) also kill, injure and block access to healthcare, education and development. In Afghanistan, IEDs now kill ten times more civilians than landmines.

The nature of conflict has also changed, with the increased role of non-state actors and fewer stable peace agreements creating a more complex –and dangerous- environment for humanitarians.

“More than Mines” highlights the changes that are taking place in the world and how the United Nations and its civil society partners working in mine action have adapted to meet today’s challenges. The adaptation is crucial to keep humanitarian priorities central and respond to the needs of the people and countries afflicted by warfare.

To see what this means in real life, check out this new video from UNMAS on Cote d’Ivoire, where the United Nations worked with the National Authorities to make the country safer through better management of its weapons and ammunition.

Activities at United Nations Headquarters

At UNHQ this week there will be three panel discussions, two on Monday 30 March (Vision from the Field, The IED Threat) and one on 31 March (Mine Action: It’s Your Business).

more than mines



On 1 April there will be a demining demonstration with a deminer and his best friend (that's the mine detection dog!). If you want to see what manual demining is all about, take an hour out of your afternoon and come to Conference Room 8 in the General Assembly building at 2.00 p.m. (just in front of the Vienna café, so you can have a coffee too). Mine Action will also be featured in the Secretary-General's Noon briefing.

Later on 1 April, you are invited to the opening ceremony for a new photo exhibit and the opportunity to experience the new "Digital Minefield" in the lobby of the United Nations Visitor Centre. Last seen in the New Museum "Sweeper", (<http://www.mineaction.org/unmas/videos/unmas-sweeper>) is a multi-sensory experience that combines visual, audio, physical, mobile and interactive installation elements. To experience the "Sweeper" exhibit, visitors need to download the "Sweeper" mobile application (android or IOS supported – bring your smart phones and ear buds) and using iBeacon technology the "Sweeper" application will provide an audio tour guide to simulate the experience of walking through a minefield. The exhibition will also include a section of four "living portraits", which, using the "Sweeper" application will allow you to hear the stories of the people in the photos. The "More than Mines" photo exhibition shows the wide range of UN mine action work, with photos from the Central African Republic, Gaza, Haiti and Somalia.

This event will take place from 6-8pm in the United Nations Visitor's lobby. So come along, learn more and enjoy live music and sushi!

And one more thing, on 2 April the United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards will be designated by the Secretary-General. His first video statement about UN mine action work will be published on 4 April 2015. Stay tuned. All events are listed in Global and New York Announcements on your iSeek page.

Journalists are welcome.

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