

JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PEACE OPERATIONS AND THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is an integral component of nine peacekeeping operations and contributes significantly to the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative. In 2019, UNMAS helped to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers by clearing and verifying the safety of patrol routes in the Abyei area, Lebanon, South Sudan and Western Sahara, and by training peacekeepers – before and after deployment – to mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The number of peacekeeper fatalities from IED incidents in Mali has fallen from 24 in 2016 to 5 in 2019, thanks in large part to UNMAS efforts, while the framework for a whole-of-system approach to the urgent threat of IEDs has been finalized. UNMAS also contributed to the protection of civilians, ensuring that weapons and ammunition used by security services are safely managed and stored in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

UNMAS is active in special political missions, mapping explosive ordnance contamination in Libya, and helping to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and civilians in Somalia. In Somalia, UNMAS also provided technical and training to enhance the capacity of AMISOM troops to mitigate the threat posed by IEDs, while strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership.

Mine action is an essential enabler of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts. While located within the Department of Peace Operations, UNMAS has an explicit, system-wide mandate and serves as the coordinator for the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action and the Mine Action Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster. In that capacity, UNMAS led the update of the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, and ensured that Humanitarian Response Plans in 17 countries included mine action, thereby targeting 19 million people in need of protection from the impact of explosive ordnance in humanitarian crises.

In a number of non-mission settings, from Burkina Faso to Nigeria, Colombia to the State of Palestine, UNMAS guidance to national institutions and non-governmental organizations on weapons and ammunition management, IED threat mitigation, explosive ordnance risk education, assistance to victims and survivors of explosive incidents, and implementation of relevant disarmament and human rights treaties is helping to ensure the extension of State authority, build confidence in peace processes, and empower communities to retain mobility and pursue their livelihoods in spite of the threat posed by explosive ordnance.

Mine action creates the conditions needed for the work of peace operations to succeed. The role of UNMAS in this endeavour will be crucial for many years to come.



UN Photo

Rosemary A. DiCarlo,
Under-Secretary-General
for Political and Peacebuilding
Affairs



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Jean-Pierre Lacroix,
Under-Secretary-General
for Peace Operations
Chair, United Nations Inter-Agency
Coordination Group on Mine Action