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UK's Department for International Development Continues to Support Explosive Hazard Management and Risk Education Activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 9 June 2019 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq would like to highlight the role of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) as a key facilitator of stabilization and humanitarian efforts through the support of explosive hazard management and risk education activities in the retaken areas of Iraq.

More than two years after the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) retook areas previously under Da'esh control, the presence of explosive hazards continues to act as one of the primary inhibitors for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) back to their homes. The scale, density, and complexity of explosive hazards is unprecedented, making Iraq one of the most contaminated countries in the world.

Support from the United Kingdom through DFID has a significant impact on clearance efforts in the country, allowing for the continuation and expansion of UNMAS activities in the retaken areas of Iraq. In collaboration with its implementing partners and the Government of Iraq, UNMAS has coordinated a humanitarian response framework that tackles explosive hazard contamination through three different strategies: direct explosive hazard management through clearance measures, enhancement of government capacity through advanced trainings, and provision of risk education to vulnerable and displaced communities.

Risk education is a key activity supported by the United Kingdom since inception. Life-saving messages are delivered to affected communities via sessions mostly organized in IDP camps, schools and community centers. To extend the reach of risk education messages, creative tools such as the screening of TV clips, the printing of life-saving messages on taxis, date packages, water bottles and gloves as well as the use of virtual reality goggles have also recently been developed and used. These initiatives are essential to avoid accidents caused by explosive hazards.

British Chargé d'Affaires in Baghdad John Tucknott said: *"The UK is the largest contributor to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action in Iraq. UK aid supports UNMAS in clearing explosive hazards, educating vulnerable communities on how to stay safe and helping to train Iraq's National Demining Authority. It also supports search and clearance teams clearing important infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and roads, enabling Iraqis to safely return to their homes. We are particularly pleased that in Sinjar these teams are gender-balanced and include members belonging to different religions and ethnicities."*

"Explosive hazards continue to have an adverse effect on afflicted communities in Iraq. Our primary mandate is to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of IDPs to their homes. We cannot do that when an estimated 70 per cent of explosive hazards still lie underneath the rubble," said Pehr Lodhammar, Senior Programme Manager of UNMAS in Iraq. *"Risk education and the clearance of explosive hazards always come together. To avoid accidents, it is crucial to teach affected communities which behaviours to adopt when encountering explosive hazards."* added Pehr Lodhammar.

Contact

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