

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE GLOBAL ADVOCATE FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF MINES AND EXPLOSIVE HAZARDS**

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**MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND
ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION**

New York, 4 April 2019

The first step, or the second or the third, could be your last. If you are in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria or Yemen today, you may not even need to take a step. You could just turn on a light, or open a cupboard, and that could set off an explosion that could bring down your house and your neighbours' houses.

Today, is the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action and I am helping the United Nations bring attention to the continuing struggle to rid the world of landmines and explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

Last month was the 20-year anniversary of the "entry into force" of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. So far 164 States have ratified or acceded to this Treaty. Eighty-eight countries have destroyed more than 50 million stockpiled anti-personnel landmines. Thirty-one states that had landmines on their territory, have cleared them. This is a remarkable achievement that deserves to be celebrated.

It was brought about by advocacy, fuelled by dismay and disgust. From the energy of activists and dreamers, through the work of civil society organizations, the United Nations, academics, international jurists, journalists and governments, a weapon that was once in widespread use, which was easy and inexpensive to make and deploy, was stymied by collective action. Every landmine not made, means potentially that one child's life was not violently taken away or altered forever.

The United Nations remains committed to a world free from the threat of mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, which is why it has today launched a global campaign "Safe Ground," which promotes the linkage between mine action, sport and the Sustainable Development Goals. Safe ground turns minefields into playing fields to foster communities and to raise awareness about victims/survivors of armed conflict.

I call on everyone to take stock of the fact, that regardless of the task that we face, like when tackling the scourge of anti-personnel landmines 20 years ago, by taking collective action, through argument and advocacy and changing minds and attitudes, and through painstaking and tenacious work we can make this world a better place.