

UNITED NATIONS



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**Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, UNMAS Director
Remarks at ministerial-level reception on mine action
29 September 2015**

Excellencies, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres,
Ambassadors, Mr. Craig, Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday, in Cyprus, a farmer drove his tractor over a landmine that was laid decades ago.

Today, waves of displaced families and refugees flee terror and massacres, walking along roads and through territories which have been, and are being, affected by shelling, bombing, and the explosives hidden by terrorists.

The lands of Iraq, Syria and Yemen come to mind. These people's flight is also taking them to paths which, today, look peaceful, like some parts of Croatia for instance. Some of these peaceful looking paths and sometimes borders are still contaminated by past conflicts and can still kill and maim.

This is why mine action is necessary. This is why UNMAS is always so much in demand.

I am grateful to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for giving all of us the opportunity to pause and remember that things can change when good intentions are translated into action.

I am humbled by the support of the United Nations Secretary-General, and I am honoured to have Mr. Daniel Craig join the fight against the terror of explosives.

A number of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General are amongst us tonight. Their presence is testimony of the role that UNMAS is called to play in the countries where they lead the United Nations.

Not so long ago, Deputy Special Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, Lise Grande, sent me a request to deploy UNMAS experts to the Kurdish Region of Iraq. At the same time, SRSG Kubis was calling on the Secretary-General and the Security Council to support the deployment of UNMAS to Iraq "in full force" to assist with IED clearance, contribute to stabilization and increase the impact of other actors through cooperation and a coherent approach.

Not so long ago, I also received a request from non-governmental mine action organizations stationed in Southern Turkey to establish a small UNMAS presence to assist them and coordinate their action.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Gaziantep also pressed UNMAS to deploy. As we speak, one of my female colleagues is establishing a small UNMAS capacity to assess and plan the best ways to tackle the threats faced by the population, across the border, in Syria; how to train them, educate them to the risks posed by a variety of explosives, IEDs and booby-traps left behind to kill them, clear land and paths, and make their movements safer.

It is thanks to you, donor countries, that, there is an UNMAS Headquarters, with staff to answer the phone; to provide technical and advisory assistance in short missions to the field; to send experts to your meetings to share good practices and lessons learnt; and also to do the necessary “back-office support work”; devise indicators to measure the impact that, not only UNMAS, but the UN system as a whole, has when carrying out mine action activities.

It is thanks to the top donors to field operations, such as Japan, USAID, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada and Italy, just to name a few, that today, UNMAS is providing that under-appreciated type of humanitarian assistance, without which humanitarian workers would be confined to hotels unable to reach out to communities in need, for fear of losing their lives before saving others.

It is thanks to donors such as the Netherlands, our host tonight, and also Finland and New Zealand, that there is an UNMAS to assess situations, plan and prepare field operations and oversee budget allocation and financial reporting.

All other partners, whose efforts to sustain our operation, through funding and also in lending to UNMAS your personnel, deploying them at short notice (thank you Sweden), or offering training facilities and trainers and donating equipment, you do deserve great praise at this time of dire economic constraints. We would also like to give you praise today for your understanding that the United Nations does add value to bilateral action.

Last but not least, I want to thank the countries which host us, the so-called “affected countries”, and through them, their communities of women and men, for their trust in us. We never forget that we are their guests/your guests, as we help you carry the heavy responsibility to protect your people, and also enable them to manage their mine action problems by themselves, one day, in full sovereignty.

Excellencies,

I am calling on all of you to raise your voice in United Nations, and other, meetings and summits; to reinforce, to your finance ministers and parliaments, that investing, politically and financially, in mine action yields immediate and long-term returns: every life saved is an extraordinary dividend.

With your indulgence, I am also calling on your countries representatives to be vocal in their support to our work when, under Poland’s stewardship, the General Assembly adopts, this October, the 4th Committee Mine Action Resolution. I also ask you not to forget the significance of our action, including in countering IEDs, when you sit in the Security Council and draft its mandates for UN action.

Excellencies,

Your addresses of the past few days to the General Assembly and to UN Summits, highlighted your determination to **act**; to act now; and to act collectively.

The impact of mine action is concrete; tangible and measurable. I thank you for supporting the UN in mine action. We all owe it to the communities living in fear, as well as to our colleagues, who dedicate their lives to protecting others'.

Mr. Minister.... Mr. Craig, on behalf of the UN mine action community, I thank you.

End.