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**Expert report**

Assistance in mine action

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## Introduction

Mine action is critical for an effective humanitarian response in conflict and post-conflict situations [...] Yet in far too many places around the world, new or re-emerging conflicts are creating yet another legacy of explosive hazards, such as landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices.

*Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General, 2016<sup>1</sup>*

Land mines are often used in wars and armed conflicts to gain advantage over the opponent party by creating defensive tactical blockages, channelling attacking forces into predetermined fire zones or to act as passive weapons aimed at challenging enemy's access to valuable terrains, resources and facilities. Land mines are widespread throughout the world and constitute a menace to civilians.

These explosives were once buried into the ground by soldiers in order to protect their positions during wars. After those wars were over, mines remained where they were planted, waiting for its victims. They lay in soil or dirt for years until they are accidentally activated by someone or something like vehicles or cattle. Though some of them (anti-personnel mines, for example) are supposed to go off only in certain conditions (for example, when

pressure on the trigger plate exceeds certain threshold), nobody can say for sure what will cause the explosion: a person going home from work or a school bus full of children.

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1 International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Secretary-General's Message for 2016. // The United Nations [Official site] [http://www.un.org/en/events/mineawarenessday/2016/sg\\_message.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/events/mineawarenessday/2016/sg_message.shtml)

## History

It is fundamentally wrong to think that such kind of weaponry as mines came into existence only with the advent of high technologies. First explosive land mines are said to be used in 1277 in the territory of contemporary China during the conflict of the Chinese and the Mongols. They were compounded of gunpowder put in hollow cast iron cannonball shells. Europeans came a close second to the Chinese. The first known land mine in this region was constructed by a Spanish soldier Pedro Navarro in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Also at the time the first cluster explosive devices were invented by a German military engineer Samuel Zimmermann. As for the fougasse, it was designed and actively used in several European wars of the eighteenth century and in the American War of Independence. A new phase in the mine's history began during the American Civil War, when Confederate troops constructed first modern mechanically fused high-explosive anti-personnel mines. Later these techniques were improved in Imperial Germany, which might have given it important advantage over the Allies in the First World War but for the fact that these designs were copied and manufactured by all major participants of that War.

Nowadays weaponry all over the world progresses at such a quick rate that there exist countless modifications of armaments including explosive devices. The situation is becoming worse as mines continue to injure at least 4,300 people every year.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Landmine monitor 2012. Page 1. November 2012.

## 1. Variety of mines

The issue of land mines continues to be one of the most important items of the UN agenda today as many countries in the world are still affected by explosive remnants of war (ERW) and each year thousands of people (mostly children, women and the elderly) fall victims to them. According to the UN estimations, there are about 100-120 million land mines still buried in the ground worldwide. Experts believe that it will take about ten centuries and 100 billion dollars to remove all the land mines.<sup>3</sup>

Land mines are figuratively called "the weapon of the poor", and there is a reason for that. They are cheap (one mine costs from \$3 to \$30),<sup>4</sup> easy to use, and can be very useful in creation of artificial obstacles. However, anti-personnel mines, which were specially designed for the purpose of destruction and containment of enemy forces, defence of civilian and military infrastructure, coastlines and antitank minefields lie in the ground and pose a threat to civilians due to their indiscriminate and deferred nature.

This is a serious problem not only because land mines can kill or cripple civilians, but also because land where mines remain cannot be farmed anytime soon. This, in return, brings the affected countries to a whole range of difficulties of another kind: they cannot make use of it for agricultural

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3 Applied Engineering Products// Landmine Removal [http://www.aepcoinc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=10&Itemid=69](http://www.aepcoinc.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=10&Itemid=69)

4 Op cit

purposes, they cannot build there, and sometimes it is dangerous for people to live there, because they might be unaware of mines which are around. From the technical point of view, the most difficult part of mine action is actually detecting a mine, as once it is found, it can be easily destroyed right on the spot by professional sappers.

Mine is defined by the UN Amended Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as “a munition placed under, on or near the ground or other surface area and designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person or vehicle”.<sup>5</sup> However, there are many various type of mines spread around the world.

There are many ways to categorise the mines. The most significant, possibly, is “by purpose” – almost all treaties and other documents that touch upon the problem of mines use that system. In this case one should say that there are two types of mines: anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines, sometimes also called anti-armour mines. Anti-personnel mine (AP-mine) is a mine primarily designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons. This type of mines is usually very small, so a larger number of mines can be laid over an area. Anti-personnel mines can be activated or triggered by a tripwire.

Anti-tank mine (AT mine), in turn, is made

to damage or destroy heavy armoured vehicles including tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers. In comparison to anti-personnel mines, AT mines possess a larger explosive charge and can be triggered only by a heavy vehicle.

However, there are other important points that are used to determine the effect of particular type of mines and whether those mines can be used, cannot be used at all or can be used to a certain extent. Those points concern various ways to disable the mine and protection against demining activities. Mines can be equipped with various mechanisms – anti-handling devices or self-destruct modules as well as triggers designed to activate the charge only in certain condition – when the weight on the pressure plate exceeds certain threshold.

The purpose of anti-handling device is to render mine unclearable or at least greatly increase the difficulty required to disable it without explosion. One of main steps which an engineer has to perform is opening the casing, which protects trigger and charge from harsh environment. Anti-handling device activates the charge when someone tries to tamper with the mine – some devices are connected to screws that hold the mine together, and they explode it when the screw is being loosened, some are using precise detectors which react to movement, thus the mine explodes when someone tries to pull in out of the ground. In general, mines equipped with such modules are prohibited almost globally as they pose a lot more danger to people.

Self-deactivation or self-destruction devices, on the contrary, are designed to

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5 Amended Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices // The United Nations <http://www.un.org/Depts/mine/UNDocs/protocol.htm>

protect people from accidental explosion. The idea is that if a mine should be active during certain period of time – duration of military encounters can be estimated to some extent, and after that period of time expires, the mine should no longer pose a threat. However, it is worth mentioning that sometimes such devices can malfunction, and even if they do their job well, the fact that the trigger has been disabled doesn't nullify a chance of explosion – some types of charges, if intact, can be activated by other means, most often heat or fire. For example, a person with insufficient education, who does not know how mines look like, might take it home and place it close to fire.

Some other types of mines worth mentioning are flame mines, bounding mines and blast resistant mines. Flame mine, or flame fougasse is a type of mine which uses an explosive charge to pour burning liquid onto a target. This type of mines was designed in Britain in the 1940's and used widely throughout World War II. Similar devices were widely used in Korean and Vietnam Wars.<sup>6</sup>

Bounding mine is an AP mine than has two charges which are activated consequently – a small propelling charge that launches explosive module upwards for about a meter, and main charge that is contained within explosive module along with metal or ceramic fragments. The trigger activates propelling charge and ignites a fuse that detonates main charge after a small delay. Such design greatly improves the size of an area affected by explosion and fragmentation, increasing

effectiveness of the device.

Blast resistant mine is a kind of landmine that has a special fuse designed to be insensitive to a shockwave from a nearby explosion. Thus, it is difficult to destroy these mines by explosive demining techniques so it becomes extremely challenging and slow to perform mine clearing activities in such minefields.

Certainly, explosive devices are not limited to different types of landmines. Explosive remnants of war also include artillery shells, naval mines and aerial bombs. The last-mentioned are chiefly dangerous as whereas mines can usually detonate along of proximity of a person or a vehicle, misfired aerial bombs can explode due to rusty trigger motor.

### **Purposes of mine action**

At first sight, mine action is simply about removing land mines from the ground of the affected regions and making the area or territory habitable and safe again. However, it is a lot more complex activity that also includes increasing awareness of people that live in mine-affected regions, helping victims of mine-related incidents and providing those regions with opportunities for stable and sustainable development.

Mine action is composed of four main groups of activities:

- 1) Humanitarian demining, which includes mine and explosive remnants of war survey, land release, mapping,

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6 Rottman G. L. The Big Book of Gun Trivia. Osprey Publishing, 2013.



marking and clearance;<sup>7</sup>

2) Risk education (RE) is the communication to the public about the risk of land mines and explosive remnants of war and how to act in the proximity of ERW. Within RE Mine Awareness Days are held annually for the same reasons;<sup>8</sup>

3) Victim aid, which includes rehabilitation and reintegration into the society;

4) Advocacy. It signifies promoting policies and practices aimed at reduction of the landmines and ERW threat. It is usually executed within disarmament and international humanitarian law. The most common treaties applied are the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.<sup>9</sup>

Generally, mine action programs around the world are aimed at reducing the risk caused by ERW and landmines to a level where people can live in safety. Social, economic and health development of a country or region are also taken into account. Mine action activities are

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7 Glossary of mine action terms, definitions and abbreviations // UNMAS [http://www.mineactionstandards.org/fileadmin/MAS/documents/imas-international-standards/english/series-04/IMAS\\_04.10\\_Glossary\\_of\\_mine\\_action\\_terms\\_definitions\\_and\\_abbreviations.pdf](http://www.mineactionstandards.org/fileadmin/MAS/documents/imas-international-standards/english/series-04/IMAS_04.10_Glossary_of_mine_action_terms_definitions_and_abbreviations.pdf)

8 International Mine Action Standards. // UNMAS <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/standards/international-mine-action-standards-imas/imas-in-english/>

9 UNMAS – Advocacy. // UNMAS <http://www.mineaction.org/issues/advocacy>

conducted mostly by the United Nations Mine Action Center (UNMAS) and certain NGO's, such as The HALO Trust. The international community has to work together in order to advance the goal of a world free of land mines and explosive remnants of war.

## 2. Current situation

The use of land mines has a bad impact, primarily on developing nations and regions. The majority of countries with a large amount of mine-affected areas simply do not possess adequate resources to fight the adverse effects caused by mines. Despite growing global awareness about the short-term and long-term consequences of the use of anti-personnel landmines, the number of mines planted continues to exceed the number of mines extracted and destroyed. The countries with the most unfavorable situation (where the number of undetected mines exceeds 1 million) are Egypt (23 million mines), Iran (16 million), Angola (15 million), Afghanistan (10 million), Iraq (5-10 million), Cambodia (4-7 million), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6 million), Vietnam (3 million), Mozambique (2-3 million), Sudan (2 million), Somalia (1-2 million).<sup>10</sup> There is also a large group of countries where the number of active anti-personnel land mines buried in their territory ranges from 100.000 to 1.000.000 items.

According to experts' estimations,

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10 Facts About Landmines. PUBLICATION INFO // CARE Organisation [Official site] <http://www.care.org/emergencies/facts-about-landmines>

there are from 80 to 100 million activated undetected anti-personnel land mines.<sup>11</sup> This figure rises annually by about 2,5 million, while only 200.000 mines are destroyed per year.<sup>12</sup> Thus the tempo of laying mines worldwide exceeds the tempo of demining by 10 to 20 times.

The responsibility for the current situation is partly on the shoulders of the manufacturer and exporting countries of land mines, namely:

Austria, Belgium, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, North and South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, UK, USA, Vietnam and countries that used to be a part of Soviet Union as well as countries of former Yugoslavia.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.1 International instruments relating to mine action

Since the presence of anti-personnel land mines and explosive remnants of war in some countries and regions of the world is a very serious challenge for the whole international community, several international agreements, which regulate or ban the use of certain types of landmines and other weapons that use explosives,

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11 Minesweepers // Facts about landmines  
<http://www.landminefree.org/home/index.php/support/facts-about-landmines>

12 Landmines // Digiserve.com <http://www.uk.digiserve.com/mentor/ids/landmine.htm>

13 Op cit

were created. These instruments are a part of international humanitarian law. The policy of the United Nations is to provide larger efforts to help ensure compliance with relevant resolutions and international legal norms and standards. The crucial international instruments of mine action are:

1) The United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Protocols II and V - 1980; Amended Protocol II - 1996

This document is aimed at prohibition of the use of certain conventional weapons, which are considered especially hazardous and injurious or whose effects are indiscriminate. The Convention was signed on April 10, 1981 and became effective on December 2, 1983. There are 123 parties to this Convention and 50 original signatories. It includes 5 Protocols, but within this committee it is important to focus on the second and the fifth one as they touch upon the problem of landmines and ERW.

Protocol II (The Protocol on Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices) is a United Nations treaty that has the objective of restriction of the use of land mines, remotely delivered mines and booby traps, including mines laid to waterway crossings or river crossings, though it does not apply to the use of anti-ship mines at sea or inland water ways.<sup>14</sup> This Protocol was firstly applied only to international armed conflicts. It was accessed or

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14 Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II) // University of Minnesota Human Rights Library <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/1980d.htm>



ratified by almost all of the parties to the Convention. The main purpose of adopted constraints was to eliminate irresponsible use of mines, which entails serious risks for civilian population, to reduce collateral damage done to civilians and environment. The adoption of Protocol II was to some extent a compromise between the common humanitarian goals and the interests of individual states.

A major disadvantage of this Protocol was its applicability only to international armed conflicts, while the most significant number of civilian casualties caused by indiscriminate nature of antipersonnel mines occurred during internal conflicts. In addition, while prohibiting general use of mines against civilians and civil infrastructure, it did not define accurately enough what an AP mine is, thus creation a loophole in legislation. Another defect of this Protocol was that it gave definitions of mines and booby traps but did not differentiate strictly “anti-personnel mines” from “anti-tank mines”.

Trying to tackle those disadvantages, France proposed to amend this Protocol in 1993. In 1996 the amended version of the Protocol was adopted. Among many results of this event was prohibition of the use of non-detectable antipersonnel mines, remotely delivered anti-personnel mines and other types of mines, if they were not equipped with effective self-destruct mechanism and/or deactivation mechanism, as well as all types of booby traps (mines, specially camouflaged under the seemingly innocuous items). Regional armed conflicts were also included in the Protocol; it became more comprehensive and effective.

The provisions of the article 3 “General restrictions on the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices” were significantly expanded and concretized. According to this article, States Parties to the Protocol are responsible for all the mines and other devices they use, and States Parties undertake to clear and destroy or maintain antipersonnel and other types of mines in accordance with the procedure stipulated in Article 10 of the Protocol. Weapons to which this Article applies shall strictly comply with the standards and limitations specified in the Technical Annex with respect to each category. The article 3 also prohibits the use of mines equipped with both self-destruct and anti-handling devices, if the latter continues to operate after the former deactivates the mine. It also prohibits the use of mines which can be triggered by presence of conventional mine detectors. The main objective of general limitations is to eliminate the possibility of civilian casualties. Many states, such as Israel, India, China and Russian Federation, are not parties of the Convention, but have signed Protocol II or/ and the amended version of the Protocol.

Protocol V (The Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War) is aimed at limitation of the effect of unexploded or undetected devices on civilians after an armed conflict ends.<sup>15</sup> It obliges the parties to take certain measures in affected territories under their

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15 Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V to the 1980 CCW Convention). // International Committee of the Red Cross <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/385ec-082b509e76c41256739003e636d/c110d2926d08a892c1256e280056b275>

control after the end of a conflict: they shall mark and clear, remove or destroy ERWs, survey and assess the risk posed by ERWs, access the needs required for marking and clearing, removal or destruction of ERWs and they also should make considerable efforts and mobilize resources needed to implement these activities.<sup>16</sup>

The Protocol was adopted on November 28, 2003, and came into effect on November 12, 2006. 91 countries are parties to this protocol.

2) The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (informally known as the Ottawa Treaty)<sup>17</sup> - 1997

The primary objective of this treaty signed on December 3, 1997 is elimination of anti-personnel land mines around the world. It was signed by a total of 133 UN states and ratified by 40 of them, though some major international arena actors have not signed it, namely the United States, China and the Russian Federation. The US President (Bill Clinton at the time) did not sign the Treaty due to being “under heavy pressure

from the Pentagon”,<sup>18</sup> which declared the necessity to use landmines as “a deterrent along the North and South Korea border”.<sup>19</sup> The Russian Federation, according to Roman Dolgov, an independent Russian expert on the problem of prohibition of landmines, refused to sign the Treaty because it considered its participation in the Geneva Convention of 1980 to be sufficient. Another reason for such a move was that Russian military lobby believed it was highly important for the country to preserve landmines in the arsenal. Dolgov also says that the Russian stance has traditionally been tied to the positions of the USA and China and that Russia won't join the Treaty until these two countries do.<sup>20</sup> China did not sign the Treaty for slightly different reasons. Firstly, China would not be able to make money from exporting its landmines. Secondly, as the Chinese border defence forces argued, the country had a long territorial dispute with some of its neighbours, thus it made no sense to remove landmines as they

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16 Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V to the 1980 CCW Convention) // <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=E-1186BE09E95FC74C125721300427DDC>

17 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction // INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/580>

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18 Why won't the US sign a land mine treaty? // National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/peace-justice/editorial-why-wont-us-sign-land-mine-treaty>

19 Op cit

20 Конвенция по запрету мин: Россия не подписала, но соблюдает ее положения // Радио ООН <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/russian/archives/135765/>

were an effective tool of military defence.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the countries bordering with China were not abandoning mines, so joining the treaty would have been a huge mistake for China.

It is important to mention that the Ottawa Treaty does not ban mines that are made to detonate by “the presence, proximity or a contact of a vehicle”<sup>22</sup> and the Treaty does not ban remotely controlled devices. In other words, the Treaty focuses primarily on “victim-activated” devices,<sup>23</sup> the ones that are designed to maim or kill people, and ignores anti-tank and anti-vehicle mines that pose a serious threat to the civilian population as well.

The Ottawa Convention is not just a treaty prohibiting land mines and imposing certain restrictions on its parties. This convention is of historic importance, as it was the first time the international actors agreed to totally ban a weapon which was widely used throughout the world. Moreover, the treaty does not only ban the use and stockpile of land mines, it represents a complex and comprehensive program of activities oriented on providing an adequate response to the humanitarian consequences of the use of AP mines.

The signatory parties must cease the

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21 Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000, Alastair Iain Johnston. 2007. P.: 138

22 Overview of the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines // International Committee of the Red Cross <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/legal-fact-sheet/landmines-fact-sheet-150807.htm>

23 Op cit

production and development of AP mines and destroy its stockpile of AP mines within four years. Within ten years after ratifying the treaty a party should have all its mine-affected areas cleared. The countries that have ratified the treaty are allowed, however, to keep landmines for mine detection, mine clearance and mine destruction training techniques. This convention is one of the most important documents for mine action activities around the world.

3) The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) - 2008;

This international treaty bans the use, transfer and production of cluster bombs (this is a kind of explosive weaponry that spreads small bomblets<sup>24</sup> over large territory and is particularly dangerous for civilians). It was signed on December 3, 2008 in Dublin and has been ratified by 100 states.

There is a strict obligation, which all Parties to the Convention must fulfil:

“Never under any circumstances [...]”

(a) Use cluster munitions;

(b) Develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, cluster munitions;

(c) Assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.<sup>25</sup>

The reason for this convention to be

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24 Little bombs with individual triggers and charges

25 The Convention on Cluster Munitions. // The Convention on Cluster Munitions. <http://www.clusterconvention.org/the-convention/convention-text/>

mentioned there is that so-called “bomblets” were causing plenty of casualties among civilians – they are smaller than mines or aerial bombs and they are scattered over large areas with little precision, thus it’s harder to find them in order to disable or destroy as well as to close the affected area off – determining points of impact for all bomblets is basically impossible.

### 3. The UN Mine Action around the world

Twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, many specialized agencies and funds play a crucial role in mine action programs in 30 countries and three territories.<sup>26</sup> A major part of actual work, such as demining activities and risk education, is executed by NGO’s that cooperate closely with the UN in these areas.

The resolutions on “Assistance in Mine Action”, adopted by the General Assembly, asserted mine action as an “important and integrated component” of United Nations humanitarian assistance and development. They also acknowledged significant contribution of the United Nations and particularly noted the coordination role of UNMAS and the importance of work that IACG-MA<sup>27</sup> carries out to increase the impact of the United Nations in the field of mine action.

Some other documents of great impor-

tance for global demining were elaborated and signed by the members of the UN. For instance, in 1993 the resolution on assistance in mine clearance A/RES/48/7 was adopted, the resolutions of 1994, 1996 and 1997 further supported it. The latter – resolution on assistance in mine action (A/RES/51/149) stated that a great effort should be made by international community to ensure safety of civilians and success of demining operations all over the globe. It also calls on the Department of Humanitarian affairs, asking it to elaborate integral demining programs in conjunction with different regional organizations to improve effectiveness of the UN in that matter. Moreover, one of the most significant parts of this document is that the above-mentioned department will be responsible for encouraging the activity to solve an issue of obtaining information about scientific research aimed at improvement of demining methods. It was signed by more than 130 states.

The UN resolutions on the matter adhere to the concept established in resolution A/RES/51/149. There is a noticeable progress in development of international law and practical activity implemented to solve the problems of demining. For example, the resolution A/RES/56/219 contains a point concerning strategy of demining actions within the period from 2001 to 2005, which was presented by Secretary-General (article 11), as well as the Program of (information) coverage the demining activity (article 12). Furthermore, the development of a plan on meeting the needs of demining was encouraged (article 15) as well. The resolution A/RES/58/127 also mentions the governing principles of demining action in terms of peace and cease-

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26 E-mine. The UN mine action gateway // UNMAS <http://www.mineaction.org/>

27 Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

fire agreements.

The latest resolution, which was adopted in 2015 (A/RES/70/80), says that all demining action performed according to the International standards of demining activity is welcomed and encouraged.

### 3.1. The main inter-agency partners working for a world free of the threat of landmines

*United Nations Mine Action Service.* UNMAS is located in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Office of Rule and Law and Security Institutions. This UN-controlled organization is responsible for ensuring an effective, proactive and coordinated United Nations response to landmines and ERW's through effective collaboration with 11 other UN departments, agencies and various funds. Results of the UNMAS progress in implementing the objectives of the United Nations Strategy on Mine Action can be seen in UNMAS annual reports.<sup>28</sup>

*UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.* DPKO integrates mine action into worldwide UN peacekeeping operations in line with a November 2003 Presidential Statement of the Security Council.

*United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.* UNODA advises and assists the UN Secretary-General in his work related to the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. ODA promotes universal participation in international

legal frameworks related to landmines and explosive remnants of war and assists countries in complying with their treaty obligations.

*United Nations Development Programme.* Through its country offices UNDP assists mine-affected countries to establish or strengthen national and local mine action programmes.

*United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.* UNIDIR generates ideas and promotes action on disarmament and security.

*United Nations Office for Project Services.* UNOPS is a principal service provider in mine action, offering project management and logistics services for projects and programmes managed or funded by the United Nations.

### 3.2 The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018

I have seen the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons, which hamper reconstruction, damage the environment and cause grievous injuries and death for decades after conflicts end. My fervent hope is that the world will one day be free from the threats caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war.<sup>29</sup>

*Ban Ki-moon*  
*United Nations Secretary-General*

The Strategy of the United Nations on

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29 The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. // UNMAS [http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/mine\\_action\\_strategy\\_mar15.pdf](http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/mine_action_strategy_mar15.pdf)

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28 Mine Action // UNMAS  
<http://www.mineaction.org/unmas>



Mine Action 2013-2018 is a six-year plan that addresses main problems of mine action. The Strategy presents common objectives and commitments to guide the United Nations in the matter of mine action for over six years. As such, this strategy provides analytical and strategic guidance for formulation, implementation and revision of the United Nations assistance at country level in a manner that is consistent with specific needs, requests and legal regimes of each case.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action is composed of several UN departments, agencies, programs and funds.<sup>30</sup> Together they provide various mine-action related services in more than 40 countries. Policies, strategies and guidance materials have been developed by that agency to ensure that all entities of the UN are taking a common approach to resolving problems of landmines and explosive remnants of war and are working toward same mutually reinforcing goals.<sup>31</sup>

Its strategic objectives are:

1. Reduction of risks to individuals and smoothening of the socioeconomic impacts of mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions;
2. Provision of comprehensive support by national and international actors to mine and explosive remnants of war victims with broader responses to injury and disability;

3. The increase of a rate at which mine action functions are transferred to national actors in order to improve national capacity to fulfil mine action responsibilities;
4. Prompting and integration of mine action in multilateral instruments and frameworks as well as national plans and legislation.<sup>32</sup>

## 4. Main obstacles to a mine-free world

Development of the negotiation process on the mine issue and signing of the Ottawa Convention by a majority of world community members are undoubtedly major steps towards solving this global disarmament and humanitarian problem. However, non-ratification of that treaty by a number of countries reduces its effectiveness, which means that landmine issue has not lost its relevance. The UN calls on members which didn't join the Convention, asking them to ratify it as it is a great step to a mine-free world.

Another obstacle is the fact that for every mine cleared, a couple dozen is laid: each year about 100.000 are removed while another 2 million landmines are planted. In other words, the rate of removing landmines cannot keep up with the rate of planting them as it takes a lot of time and effort to clear a mine-contaminated area. It is important to understand that

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30 Mine Action // <http://www.mineaction.org/>

31 Mine Action // <http://www.mineaction.org/resources/lawstreaties>

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32 The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. // UNMAS [http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/mine\\_action\\_strategy\\_mar15.pdf](http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/mine_action_strategy_mar15.pdf)



if a major part of all landmines around the globe is removed and governments comply with conventions and treaties banning landmines, people will get a chance to live a safe life without possibility of getting maimed or killed as a result of an encounter with these deadly weapons.

Furthermore, terrorists may illegally take possession of mines and use them for their own evil intentions, or they may utilise them to build improvised explosive devices (IED's), which, in return, can maim or injure many people, as the effect of IED's is highly indiscriminate.

Therefore the world society should understand that nowadays there is an extreme necessity for a comprehensive approach on this problem. First of all, mine action should be realized more perseveringly, more extensively as recommendatory documents cannot force states to comply with their provisions and legally binding conventions should be signed and ratified by as much parties as possible. Secondly, the usage of explosive devices by the armed forces should be brought down to a minimum since it costs about 100 times less to plant a landmine than to remove it and then destroy it safely.<sup>33</sup> And it is better to utilise self-destruction device – mechanism that disables the trigger after some period of time.

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33 Landmine Removal: The Facts // Applied Engineering Products [http://www.aepcoinc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=10&Itemid=69](http://www.aepcoinc.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=10&Itemid=69)

## Conclusion

To summarize, mine action issue continues to be one of the most challenging problems that the world and the international community have to face nowadays due to its complex nature and the danger it represents to the civilian population in different parts of the world. This is tremendously important to the international community because the number of people maimed, injured or killed by anti-personnel mines is very high and is only growing (from 15.000 to 20.000 every year).<sup>34</sup> This issue is very complex as areas contaminated by landmines cannot be used for agricultural purposes for decades, and that provokes, in turn, grave economic problems for these regions forcing people to leave their homes and seek refuge, thus instigating migration.

Despite numerous international law documents, such as The Ottawa Treaty, The United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and numerous United Nations resolutions adopted on the mine action issue, the problem is still present due to large costs required to remove landmines and provide a series of mine action activities. Furthermore, considerable amounts of landmines stockpiled by certain countries are being used by some illegal armed groups around the world. Besides, certain political powers are not concerned about this problem or they simply ignore it, laying the responsibility to solve this problem on the shoulders of the United Nations and the agencies cooperating with the UN in the field of mine action.

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