

Summary Report

27th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN27) *Protecting Lives. Building Peace.*

29 April – 1 May 2024

Overview

The 27th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN27) was convened by the United Nations at the Centre de Conférence Genève in Geneva, Switzerland, from 29 April to 1 May 2024. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) co-hosted and co-organized the meeting with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and coordinated it with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs provided generous support.

Over **600** participants attended the meeting, including National Directors of mine action programmes, representatives of mine action centres, United Nations advisers, donor representatives, academics, private sector and civil society from **69** countries and territories, with **67%** male and **33%** female.

The organizers ensured that the **25** experts invited for the **five** plenaries represented a range of geographical backgrounds and gender diversity. Representatives of affected countries and territories, including National Directors, were panelists across the plenary sessions, and many more participated as presenters during the **22** side events. NGO and civil society representatives were included as subject matter experts during plenary sessions, expanding perspectives.

A day dedicated to peer-to-peer exchange between mine action national directors was introduced in 2024 (“National Director’s Day”). Participants enthusiastically welcomed it with **76%** of post-conference survey responders rating it excellent or good. Written feedback from respondents confirmed that this type of dedicated day should continue. Breakout groups organized by Arabic, French and English were also appreciated.

Feedback from the survey shows that **81%** of responders found the meeting’s logistical and organization arrangements either excellent or good. An impressive **91%** reported that the agenda addressed topics of interest to them. The plenary on “*The Role of Mine Action in Reducing the Human Cost of Weapons and Building Peace*” was the most appreciated by attendees, with **87%** rating it excellent or good. The plenary “*Mine Action and Food Security –*

Making the Investment Case”, co-organized by UNMAS, FAO, and WFP, was also positively received, with **82%** of attendees rating it excellent or good.

This year’s side events presented a wide range of topics which were rated as excellent or good by **90%** of respondents and provided space for rich and insightful discussions. Side events included topics such as: “Ukraine: Meeting Food Security Needs Through Mine Action,” “Gaza Cross-Sectoral Coordination – Mine Action as an Enabler”, “Transcending the Frontiers of Conflict: Challenges and Solutions Around Demining Border Areas”, “The Mine Action Trauma Care Collaborative: One Year Later”, “Disability Data in Mine Action: Moving Beyond Data Collection”, and “Expanding the AI Toolkit for NTS Processes”.

At the opening ceremony, UNOG Director-General Tatiana Valovaya highlighted achievements of the mine action sector and reminded that broader efforts are needed to advance peacebuilding and development. Ambassador Julien Thöni, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament, highlighted a deep commitment to the realization of a world free of mines, the impact that strong collaboration makes and how the adoption of new technologies can help make the sector safer and more efficient. Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the GICHD, and Ms. Ilene Cohn, Director of UNMAS, concluded by recalling the theme “*Protecting Lives. Building Peace*” and noted that this year’s programme was developed to maximize opportunities to exchange and learn.

The opening segment concluded with a keynote speech by Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. His remarks explored mine action’s commitment and contribution to protecting the lives of civilians and building peace. He praised the sector for its perseverance and noted that over the course of his career he has seen how the mine action sector saves lives and limbs, ensures that people can travel safely in their communities, and enables economic development. Mr. Lacroix shared examples from Colombia to illustrate how mine action contributes to peacebuilding processes. He emphasized the importance of expanding explosive ordnance risk education and victim assistance efforts, while noting the urgent need to address emerging challenges such as the increased use of IEDs and improvised mines. He closed by noting three key next steps: bolstering responses to threats from IEDs, increasing advocacy for treaty universalization, and ensuring predictable and flexible funding for mine action from all available sources. He encouraged NDM-UN27 participants to think creatively and bring new ideas, particularly on resource mobilization, and urged them to continue to innovate and establish new partnerships to build a safer and more secure world.

Access to audio from plenaries is available [here](#).

PLENARY 1

The opening plenary focused on the intersection of mine action and food security. It emphasized the need to strengthen collaboration between mine action and food security actors to restore agricultural production and livelihoods, especially given the unprecedented food crisis and rising hunger. Panelists noted the reverberating impact of explosive ordnance contamination on local communities and food production chains, including in Ukraine and Lebanon.

Discussions noted that development-focused and post-conflict contexts have a number of lessons learned and that emergency contexts require more agile responses. Examples from Ukraine and Lebanon highlighted the importance of considering the needs of local communities at a strategic level, supporting development projects to enhance farmers' capacities, and joint initiatives integrating agriculture, food security and mine action. Panelists recommended breaking down silos, implementing compensation mechanisms and tax exemptions, considering the entire food production system by prioritizing clearance of infrastructure, such as mills, along with clearing land, and fast-tracking EORE to farmers.

The importance of collaboration between food security actors, government partners, and mine action organizations was noted with an emphasis on data-driven decision-making and transparent resource allocation. The session also highlighted the potential for new forms of funding, like agricultural bonds, as detailed in a . Panelists urged a proactive and coordinated response to build on the case studies from Lebanon and Ukraine and the potential to promote joint programming in countries such as Colombia, Ethiopia, or Yemen, where mine action could help restore land to productive use and resume food production. The 5th Review Conference of the APMBC in Siem Reap in November was recognized as an opportunity to include food security in the political declaration.

PLENARY 2

This plenary focused on risk education in conflict and its role in enhancing resilience among individuals, households, communities, and countries in both active and post-conflict settings. The session explored four key aspects: how conflict preparedness and protection (CPP) combined with explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) improves resilience in active conflict; how peacebuilding messaging, coupled with EORE, strengthens resilience in post-conflict scenarios; the impact of inclusive EORE, including disability-focused risk education, on enhancing resilience; and strategies for delivering emergency EORE at scale in protracted conflicts.

Drawing insights from various regions, the panel addressed the vital role of effective risk education in fostering resilience, contributing to peace, and enhancing overall development. NPA highlighted the alarming statistic that 73% of explosive hazard casualties were civilians, emphasizing the importance of risk education. They outlined comprehensive safety measures from emergency planning to post-conflict support in areas like Gaza, Ukraine, and Yemen. In

the DRC, risk education was underscored as a life-saving tool, crucial in conflict situations. Lessons learned included gender-sensitive approaches, embedding mine action in national strategies, and securing long-term flexible funding. UNICEF Yemen provided insights into their risk education efforts, focusing on community empowerment and tailored messaging. ICRC Syria exposed the challenges of mine action in protracted conflicts, emphasizing community resilience and local capacity building. Their approach involved facilitating and supporting local actors, such as the Syrian-Arab Red Crescent, in delivering essential services despite conflict challenges.

During Q&A, participants drew attention to the challenges and the importance of transitioning responsibilities to local authorities and communities. Panelists noted the value of empowering national staff and local communities, ensuring expertise transfer, and fostering partnerships for long-term success. Despite progress, funding remained critical to sustaining mine action efforts.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the critical role of risk education in conflict-affected regions and underscored the need for sustainable approaches to empower communities and ensure long-term success in mine action initiatives.

PLENARY 3

During the inaugural National Director's Day at the NDM, this session allowed participants to exchange views on challenges, best practices and recommendations. Provided with topics and guiding questions prior to the session, four breakout groups organized by language preferences (Arabic, English/two groups, French) and chaired by national authorities were provided with topics and guiding questions prior to the session. National directors then reported back to plenary on the outcomes of those discussions along the following themes:

Regional Cooperation: Groups emphasized the need for better cooperation on resource mobilization and knowledge sharing, the importance of nationally owned processes and political buy-in, and specific challenges in cross-border clearance and language barriers. Additionally, the need to enhance regionally focused training was discussed. Participants expressed a strong desire to see more regional cooperation and proposed a regional mechanism to share best practices and expertise in a particular area of operation.

Resource Mobilization: Groups stressed the importance of well-articulated national mine action strategies, integrating crosscutting issues like the rights of persons with disabilities and gender, alongside resource mobilization plans (as in Zimbabwe). They also saw the need to integrate mine action into broader agendas like economic development and reconstruction efforts, while advocating for unified national representation in dialogues with partners. Challenges discussed included securing sustainable funding, defining timelines, and improving coordination with national authorities.

Information Management: Discussions across the board emphasized the value of IMSMA Core for data collection and management, the need for qualified, well-trained staff in the office and

in the field collecting data, the need for suitable equipment, and the analysis required to use the datasets to support decision-making and guide prioritization of tasks. Participants requested support for training in IMSMA Core and funding for updated tools.

Victim Assistance: Key points included the importance of clear policies and strategies on victim assistance, coordination among stakeholders, accurate, disaggregated data and appropriate analysis to support tailored responses, and prioritizing services in or near contaminated areas for quick responses. Participants highlighted challenges with data collection, defining victim categories, and ensuring the sustainability of assistance.

Programme Management: Participants discussed the need for holistic development approaches, inter-agency coordination, mine action integration into recovery efforts, and adherence to international standards. The Groups noted that political will was a precondition for success, and that budget alignment, long-term national capacities, and quality management continue to pose challenges.

During Q&A, participants expressed appreciation for the fruitful exchanges and encouraged continued support for regional programmes and these language-specific discussions at the NDM. They highlighted common challenges across regions and stressed the importance of following up on specific proposals in future NDM meetings.

PLENARY 4

This session explored the pivotal role of mine action in reducing the human cost of weapons, building peace, and advancing broader humanitarian, development and disarmament objectives.

Discussion drew attention to the increasing complexity, length and urbanization of conflicts, the urgent need for mine action responses that bring a transformative impact, and the ways to counter the heavy toll on civilians. Broader efforts were also touched upon, including the recently revised United Nations Mine Action Strategy for the coherence it brings to United Nations approaches, including with regards to the effective mainstreaming of mine action across various agendas; ongoing deliberations by Member States on the Pact for the Future; the momentum building towards the Fifth Review Conference on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Cambodia; and updates from the first follow up conference on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA).

Drawing on country contexts like Colombia and Nigeria, participants demonstrated how mine action is instrumental to building peace at the national and community levels and leads to durable solutions for internally displaced persons. Discussions also explored the challenges posed by improvised explosive devices and mines, including the need for more tailored explosive ordnance risk education messaging and community outreach, and the impact of these

explosive devices on stabilization and peacebuilding efforts. The Colombian experience emphasized the potential of including humanitarian demining in peace negotiations – as recently announced – plus how mine action can symbolize peace and promote community reintegration, and how it is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

An update from the recent EWIPA conference held in Oslo highlighted the significance of the EWIPA Political Declaration on reducing the human cost of weapons and the continued momentum amongst States. Whether through political action or through disarmament conventions, such disarmament approaches further strengthen linkages between mine action and solutions to countering the impact of explosive ordnance.

Speakers pointed to the need for sustained funding, community engagement, inclusivity, capacity-building, and cross-sector collaboration to effectively address the challenges posed by explosive hazards. The session concluded with a call for proactive measures, enhanced monitoring and evaluation, and a deeper understanding of contextual dynamics to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of mine action.

PLENARY 5

This session delved into innovation in the mine action sector and the imperative for increased collaboration and communication. Participants spotlighted the role of inclusivity and evidence-based approaches, as well as the need for demand-driven rather than supply-driven innovation that prioritizes safety, efficiency and effectiveness.

Panelists gave examples of implementing partners identifying and documenting needs for innovation, including efforts in Angola to test detectors in complicated terrain. However, speakers noted obstacles such as limited funding, change aversion, and the need for applied research and venture capital to drive research and development.

Key challenges discussed included the disconnect between technology developers and practitioners, external pressures from technology firms promoting high-tech solutions that may not align with the nuances of country contexts, and the importance of safety and effectiveness when adopting new technologies. Donors' role was spotlighted, particularly in defining problem sets and keeping direct lines of communication open with national authorities when considering new proposals.

Success in innovation was portrayed as a continuous learning process involving feedback loops with suppliers, rigorous testing and engagement with national authorities from the outset. The need to consider practical limitations, such as limited electricity and difficult terrains, was discussed.

Panelists emphasized the need for inclusivity and collaboration, suggesting methodologies to unlock innovation in lower-income countries through partnerships and use of interdisciplinary

approaches. The need to overcome language barriers and foster engagement across different fields were identified as crucial steps. Discussions highlighted the relevance of including persons with disabilities and the potential use of basic educational materials and videos to explain mine action to wider communities.

The session concluded with a call for improved resource utilization, streamlined collaboration, improved metrics for donors to prioritize innovations, and a recognition that innovation fosters continuous improvement.

Side Events

1. Collaborating for Impact with GIS (*ESRI and NPA*)

This event was run in coordination with the OCHA Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week. Its objective was to highlight the opportunities that online GIS technology (on which systems such as IMSMA are built) offers humanitarian communities for better data and information sharing, collaboration, and impact. Speakers included operators, national authorities and technology providers, who discussed the potential of these systems to facilitate effective communication and coordination among local, national, and international stakeholders. They also demonstrated the role of online GIS in fostering cross-sectoral engagement and data-sharing practices, alongside the challenges of maximizing these benefits. Attendees learned how these technologies can create a more connected and responsive global network dedicated to mitigating risk.

2. Ukraine: Meeting Food Security Needs Through Mine Action (*WFP and FAO*)

This side event reflected on mine action achievements and lessons learned in food security work in Ukraine. It explained project methodology including prioritization, clearance, and recovery. It discussed the role of mine action partners and their collaboration with state institutions and food system specialists. It also explored opportunities to apply best practices to other contexts with contaminated agricultural land.

3. Performance Management and Monitoring – How to Assess Your Performance to Improve? (*NPA, APOPO and GICHD*)

This event highlighted the application of TNMA 07.11/02 KPI for land release and stockpile destruction operations by organizations in the field. It identified challenges and solutions to collect data consistently and measure performance within a programme, as well as to monitor and evaluate performance. The panel presented strategies to balance operational efficiency while maintaining effectiveness. It also addressed why the sector has difficulties measuring performance against standardized KPIs, and how it supports NMAAs to develop these systems.

4. The Republic of Korea Mine Action and the Way Forward (*The Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense and UNDP*)

The Republic of Korea has experienced significant shifts in both domestic and international perspectives over the past decade. This side event addressed the recently approved ROK Mine Action Act and its implications, as well as the achievements and challenges in ROK's contribution to global mine action efforts, and the partnerships between ROK and international stakeholders.

5. Animal Detection Systems Incorporation into Mine Action Programmes: Considerations from the Field (*MAG, APOPO and NPA*)

This event discussed successes, challenges and opportunities of land release using ADS in mine action programmes, including in Ukraine. There was an additional focus on coordination, national standards and accreditation.

6. Transcending the Frontiers of Conflict: Challenges and Solutions Around Demining Border Areas (*Organization of American States, Ecuador and Peru*)

The event explored good practices and challenges of post-conflict demining operations in sensitive border areas. Given their political significance, border areas are often the last areas to be demined. Reaching the goal of demining these areas is an important step towards peace between states. It is often a key attribute of peace processes, since it builds confidence through disarmament on the political front and for affected communities, while enabling the creation of a peaceful space on both sides of the border. Various case studies were presented to explore how the barriers to clearing mines across borders (political, logistical or legal) can be and have been overcome. This issue was explored from the perspective of national authorities, operators, and regional and global organizations.

7. EORE Digital Development and Application (*Catholic Relief Services Vietnam*)

Catholic Relief Services Vietnam presented their mine action programme and discussed their experience developing and implementing digital EORE.

8. Gaza Cross-Sectoral Coordination. Mine Action As An Enabler. (*UNMAS and Mine Action AoR*)

This event highlighted the essential role of mine action actors for humanitarian action in Gaza. Participants noted that they will continue to be core contributors to any debris management and reconstruction activities following a ceasefire. Currently, mine action partners support interagency aid convoys. Risk education is also integrated across multiple clusters and in emergency aid delivery contexts. Mine action actors are directly responding to Explosive Hazard Assessment requests from Food, Health, and WASH, among other sectors. This extensive coordination is reinforced by innovative information management tools created to support data sharing and encourage cross-sectoral dialogue.

9. Enhancing National Capacity and International Cooperation – The Case of Japan and Cambodia (*Japan International Cooperation Agency and Cambodian Mine Action Centre*)

The side event showcased Japan and Cambodia's collaborative contributions to global mine action and advocated for a model in which government leadership commits to building national mine action capabilities. The progress of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, a strong nationally owned programme, was detailed. The event also offered attendees the opportunity to learn about good practices and how they can contribute to the organization's efforts.

10. Disability Data in Mine Action: Moving Beyond Data Collection *(GICHD)*

This session focused on the historical disability data gap in mine action. Participants shared disability data collected by operators, donors, and NMAAs, discussing trends and their impact programming and operations. Challenges in collecting this data and potential solutions were also raised.

11. National Achievements in Mine Action: Inclusive Approach and SDGs in Azerbaijan *(Azerbaijan and UNDP)*

Key topics included how mine action can promote sustainable development and enhance gender inclusivity and address the impact of landmines and explosive ordnance on cultural heritage sites. Participants explored how nations have successfully embedded mine action into broader development frameworks, leading to robust national progress and resilience. The session fostered dialogue on leveraging international cooperation and innovative approaches to broaden the impact of mine action on sustainable development globally.

12. Enabling Mine Action in Conflict Settings: Finding Humanitarian Space in a Context of Instability *(Organization of American States and Colombia)*

Improvised and manufactured mines continue to be used in conflict areas. National mine action authorities and mine action operators recognize that communities residing in conflict zones face threats to their lives and livelihoods due to the presence of mines. Therefore, finding a way to reach these communities is a key objective for policymakers. However, providing mine action responses may prove difficult or impossible when humanitarian space is limited or non-existent. Such interventions can have serious consequences, including threats to operational staff safety from armed actors, breaches of humanitarian organization commitments to neutrality, impartiality, and independence, and increased risks to affected communities as they become targets due to mine action operations. This event examined efforts to address this dilemma from various perspectives. Colombia's national authority and operators outlined the challenge of navigating ongoing conflict amidst peace negotiations. Examples were drawn from other countries (ex. Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria Somalia and Ukraine) to compare experiences and lessons learned.

13. Mine Action in Libya *(LibMAC and UNMAS)*

This side event brought together representatives from the Libyan Mine Action Center (LibMAC) and the local NGO Free Fields Foundation (3F) to provide an overview of mine contamination

across Libya. Participants shared challenges and explored potential solutions for enhanced mine action efforts in Libya. They also delved into the extent to which various stakeholders, including international organizations, donors, and the local community, can support these efforts.

14. Addressing Recent IED Contamination: Insights, Lessons and Future Strategies by Affected States *(UNMAS)*

This side event shared lessons learned regarding new IED contamination and discussed how this relates to obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

15. Mine Action in Ethiopia: Current Status and the Way Forward *(Ethiopian Mine Action Office and UNMAS)*

This session highlighted mine action activities in Ethiopia one year and a half after the signature of the Pretoria peace agreement. It addressed the role and status of the Ethiopian Mine Action Office and operators' activities, focusing on integrating peacebuilding into risk education.

16. The Mine Action Trauma Care Collaborative: One Year Later *(MAG, Explosive Weapons Trauma Care Collective and Mine Action AoR)*

During last year's NDM-UN26, interventions in the civilian casualty care chain underpinning the Mine Action Trauma Care Collaborative were presented for the first time. In this side event, participants explored key developments over the intervening year at the intersection of humanitarian mine action and the emergency health response to civilian casualties. Expert panelists shared a range of perspectives including the increasing impact of IEDs on civilians (Small Arms Survey), the WHO's toolkits on emergency, critical, and operative care, global efforts to strengthen implementation of IMAS 13.10 on Victim Assistance, and the inaugural joint layperson first responder trainings with local stakeholders and mine action operators (MAG) s to reach communities affected by IEDs in Burkina Faso.

17. Humanitarian Mine Action As A Building Block for Inclusive Development and Peace *(HI and DRC)*

Panelists at this side event explored the potential for humanitarian mine action programmes to enable inclusive development and peace. Experiences were drawn from the West Africa region (Burkina Faso and Senegal), together with the Government of the Netherlands, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Senegal National Mine Action Authority (CNAMS). The event featured good practices of post-intervention surveys in Casamance (Senegal) and EORE programmes in Burkina Faso. It highlighted the importance of inclusive, multisectoral programming and sustainable funding to achieve effective and sustainable results.

18. Expanding the AI Toolkit for NTS Processes *(The Halo Trust and Tech 4 Tracing)*

This side event considered open-source research (OSR) and AI, as innovative tools with varied potential for ‘desk assessment’ under IMAS 08.10: Non-technical survey (NTS). OSR examples include monitoring social media to map contamination in a conflict zone, monitoring illicit weapons diversion, archival research to understand historic minelaying patterns, and satellite imagery analysis to map craters, roads, and trenches. HALO’s research team created a map by collating, categorizing, geolocating, and analyzing over 100,000 data points, indicating or identifying likely contaminated locations. This data is then used for survey prioritization, strategy formation, security assessments, and donor and media outreach. HALO is adopting this approach to monitor the Gaza conflict and plan potential mine action operations among other areas.

19. Unpacking the Localization Debate in Mine Action: Status Quo and the Road Ahead

(DanChurchAid and the Danish Refugee Council)

The side event addressed the current state of the localization debate in humanitarian mine action. Rooted in their broad mandates, both organizations signed up to the Grand Bargain commitment under localization and implemented it as a cross-cutting organizational priority. Representatives of the National Mine Action Authorities, as well as experts that have evaluated and implemented different mine action programmes, discussed necessary internal policies and procedures and identified conditions that both donors and sector could establish.

20. Innovation in Mine Action: Ukraine *(Ukraine and UNDP)*

This session discussed how new technology and the use of data and AI drive forward land release, cancellation of suspected land, and improves prioritization in Ukraine. It also considered innovative ways mine action programmes can be financed (bonds, loans, grants, front loading, vouchers).

21. Human Rights Due Diligence in Mine Action *(OHCHR and UNMAS)*

This panel explored the connection between mine action and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) and related areas of work that connect UNMAS and OHCHR’s work on engagement with non-UN security forces. It explored how UNMAS and OHCHR could improve collaboration including through casualty and explosive incident reporting and analysis.

22. Partnering for Impact: Lessons Learned from Implementation *(UNOPS)*

This side event showcased best practices and highlighted lessons learned from managing and delivering humanitarian mine action projects in complex environments across over 20 countries and territories. An interactive discussion featured case studies on how UNOPS project management processes have evolved to empower partners to succeed and how the use of technology drives (1) business efficiencies and (2) effective project delivery.