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Spain Supports Mine Action in Western Sahara

The Government of Spain has provided funds to UNMAS to help the Sahrawi Mine Action Coordination Office (SMACO) strengthen its life-saving work East of the Berm. SMACO is the local authority responsible for facilitating all humanitarian mine action in the area. Since its founding in 2013, the office has led efforts to clear landmines, destroy old stockpiles, assist victims, and teach communities how to stay safe.

Western Sahara remains one of the most heavily mined places in the world. Explosives left over from the 1975–1991 conflict remain a constant threat to civilians, nomadic herdsman, and livestock, especially camels. These hazards also make daily life difficult for United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs), as the danger limits their movement and complicates the monitoring of the ceasefire.

The funding will help SMACO lead operations in East of the Berm more independently and effectively. It focuses on, among others, facilitating mine action interventions, while improving data management and coordination with partners, ensuring a faster and safer response.

An innovative part of this project involves digital Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) to reach people online. In partnership with the all-female local NGO, the Sahrawi Mine Action Women's Team (SMAWT), the project will launch a digital awareness-raising campaign, distributing simple, life-saving messages, tailored to people living in the five refugee settlements near Rabouni, through social media platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook.

By investing in local leadership and digital technology, Spain is helping to build a safer future for vulnerable communities, protecting lives and supporting the broader peace-building mission of MINURSO.

Donor: Government of Spain

Duration: 4 months

Location: Western Sahara East of the Berm, Refugee Settlements near Rabouni.

Activities: Capacity Building of Mine Action Entity East of the Berm and Digital Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE)