

21st International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers

13-16 February 2018, Palais des Nations, Geneva

#NDMUN21

Chair's Summary

“Advancing Protection, Peace and Development” was the theme of the 21st International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN) held from 13-16 February 2018 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The United Nations Mine Action Service convened and coordinated the meeting with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action.

Over 600 delegates registered for the meeting, including national directors of mine action programmes, United Nations advisors, donor representatives, civil society and the private sector. The meeting included delegations from more than 70 countries and territories. This annual meeting aims to review challenges and progress, exchange best practices and lessons learnt. Ten national directors of mine action programmes participated in panels and many more presented at the sixteen side events held throughout the week.

The theme of this year's conference was closely aligned with the priorities of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Moreover, by emphasizing the role of mine action in responding to humanitarian emergencies, sustaining peace and achieving progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it allowed for the active participation of National Directors of mine action programmes carrying out operations in all country contexts, as well as various United Nations entities including UNDP, UNICEF, OCHA and WHO.

National directors presented on topics as varied as the urbanization of conflict, the role of mine action in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and enabling the safe return of internally displaced people. The synthesis of these field-based case studies with thematic presentations from academics, civil society and United Nations experts, resulted in substantive, yet thoroughly practical, plenaries.

The meeting also featured many high-level United Nations officials including a pre-recorded opening keynote from the Deputy Secretary-General, opening remarks from the Director-General of the United Nations at Geneva and Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev, who spoke on behalf of the Chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Kelly Clements, delivered closing remarks, emphasizing the dynamic and fruitful partnerships at the heart of mine action successes.

His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan, Special Envoy for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, delivered an inspiring closing keynote, encouraging participants with the positive progress achieved in Jordan. Ms. Selma Guso, a 28 year-old journalism graduate, who lost a leg in a landmine accident in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a child, also shared her powerful testimony and issued a call to action for greater inclusion and participation of survivors in mine action.

UNMAS ensured special attention was given to linguistic diversity and gender representation when designing both the agenda and panels composition. The Permanent Representatives of Canada and Ireland, and Deputies from Japan and the Netherlands chaired plenary sessions, all of whom were female. In a session entitled ‘No women, no peace’, women were shown to be active agents in peace and reconciliation efforts at all levels, including mine action.

A post-conference survey, which almost a quarter of registered participants responded to, provided strong support for the setting, format and substance of the meeting. On average, 75 per cent of respondents rated the plenary sessions as excellent or good. In response to last year’s survey, the number of side events was increased. The success of this change was reflected both in the high participation of all side events and the excellent ratings in the post-conference survey. On social media the hashtag NDMUN21 was used in over 600 tweets and reached over 500,000 users.

Plenary One: Prevention as Protection

By adopting a public health lens, this panel brought fresh perspectives on how mine action aims to prevent injuries, or deaths, through accidents involving explosive hazards. King’s College research fellow Ms. Alexandra Frost presented on her recent paper published in “The Lancet”, which highlighted the global public health impacts of explosive remnants of war and emphasized the need for improved injury surveillance to inform planning of mine action operations. UNICEF described the extensive explosive hazard threat in Syria where 43% of communities reported explosive hazard contamination and the importance of risk education while the conditions for survey and clearance do

not exist. The National Director of Afghanistan then presented on how the multi-faceted approach of the mine action programme in Afghanistan were effectively preventing deaths and injuries from explosive hazards, although the new contamination posed new challenges as it stretched limited resources and was generally in the most insecure areas that were difficult for humanitarian actors to access.

Plenary Two: Enabling Safe Returns

This plenary examined the importance of mine action for enabling safe returns, particularly focusing on IDPs. UNHCR presented on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and highlighted how these could be applied to mine action. OCHA's presentation presented the situation in Syria where mine action would play an important role in establishing the conditions for safe return, which do not currently exist. Finally, the National Director from Somalia presented how they have responded to the needs of displaced people by establishing a training-of-trainers for risk education and ERW injury surveillance system.

Plenary Three: The Urbanization of Conflict: Challenges and Best Practices

This session examined the impact that the increasingly urbanized nature of conflict on mine action operators in the field. AOAV highlighted the human cost of conflict in urban contexts, particularly the data collected on IEDs. ICRC then presented on the reverberating impacts of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and how emergency preparedness plans should consider issues such as safe access to water treatment plants. Finally, the National Director from Iraq presented on the challenges of addressing IEDs including the unstable security situation; the lack of international standards for addressing IEDs; a lack of accurate data; and the difficulty in guaranteeing the safe return of IDPs and returnees. Solutions to the above-mentioned challenges include increasing donor funding levels; capacity building; conducting non-technical surveys in liberated areas; and developing new technology for detecting IEDs, especially those with infrared technologies.

Plenary Four: No women, no peace

This plenary opened with [this powerful video](#) from the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, which demonstrated that although women have been, and are, active agents in peace and reconciliation efforts at all levels, women and gender analysis are regularly excluded from peace-making processes and decisions. The Gender in Mine Action Programme then described the progress that has been achieved and the challenges that remain for mainstreaming gender fully into

mine action; highlighting the review of the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes for which open consultations were being held at the NDM-UN. Finally, the National Director from Colombia described his country's efforts to ensure that gender was fully incorporated into the peace process, including the mine action provisions.

Plenary Five: Partnerships for Success

This plenary provided insights into the broad range of partnerships; including those with regional organizations (African Union), United Nations (IACG), private sector (OCHA) and donor-UN-NGO partnerships (EU and Japan as Chair). Across the diversity of the nature of the partnerships discussed, the panel demonstrated that maintaining and developing partnerships by sharing and supporting progress from both a strategic and action oriented perspective, was vital to the 2025 vision. Strengthening regional partnerships; collaborating and sharing best practices; and partnership management were all key to strengthening partnerships and their outcomes.

Plenary Six: Developing National Capacity for the 2030 Agenda

This plenary discussed the importance of strengthening national capacity to ensure the role of mine action in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is clearly understood. National Directors from Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina presented on how, as National Mine Action Centres, they have taken the initiative in linking Mine Action to 2030 agenda. The National Director of the Mine Action Centre in Jordan proposed five keys to success: strong local leadership and ownership, political will, bureaucratic support, transparency and commitment, including from the international community.

Plenary Seven: Innovations in Mine Action

The format of this plenary diverged from the traditional panel, instead inviting nine speakers to provide short and snappy presentations of recent innovations in the field of mine action. These innovations ranged from the use of big data and artificial intelligence, latest developments in information management and innovative risk education, following the format of the "X-factor" in South Sudan.

Full audio versions of all plenaries are available on the NDM-UN website:

http://www.mineaction.org/unmas/NDM_UN21