

**Closing Remarks of the 21st International Meeting of Mine Action National Programme
Directors and United Nations Advisers
Friday 16 February 2018, Geneva**

Time: 12.30 p.m.
Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room XIX Building E.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to address you today at the closing of this meeting.

As the Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, I am an avid supporter of your work. Mine action removes the deadly threat of explosive hazards from the already dangerous lives of refugees and displaced people.

This week you have gathered to discuss and better understand how mine action can advance protection, peace and development, through panels comprising academics, humanitarian and development experts and – of course - every panel had at least one National or Regional Director sharing the success and challenges of humanitarian mine action in their own context.

The side events – which were expanded this year, by popular demand – provided the chance to dig deeper into issues and for participants to share how they are tackling the pressing issues being faced in the field.

Protection

As you began with Protection, you specifically looked at the issue of how mine action can better protect the millions of people forcibly displaced today.

In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants expressed the political will of world leaders to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale. The General Assembly then tasked UNHCR with initiating and developing the Comprehensive Refugee Response framework as part of the process to follow through on these bold commitments.

I am pleased to say that, as a result of discussions with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, mine action has been included in the zero draft of this document.

I encourage all of you to advocate through your own national governments and organizations for the inclusion of mine action to be maintained in subsequent drafts of this important document.

Peace

As you turned your focus to peace, you highlighted two critical aspects of building sustainable, lasting peace.

One, that women must be substantively included in peace processes if they are to last. Perhaps this is not a surprise – we do make up half the world's population after all.

Two, that partnerships are critical; not partnerships in name only, but communicative, responsive and effective partnerships. And we see that in this room today, as you gather together as National Directors of Mine Action Centres, academics, civil society, United Nations and the private sector.

Development

Mine action is a critical enabler and accelerator for many of the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals, from enabling access to education to health care and clean water. Yesterday and this morning you examined how both strengthening national capacity and constant innovation, whether through partnerships or technology, are critical for mine action to fulfil its potential to speed progress towards these goals.

Conclusion

I hope that this has been a fruitful and productive meeting for each of you; that you have rekindled old partnerships and new ones have been sparked, that you have learnt new things from others and given others the opportunity to learn from you.

I wish you well as you return to your home countries and duty stations, as you continue to strive for a world free from the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

Thank you.

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