

Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

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

Tuesday, 13 February 2018 at 10.00 AM
Room XIX, Palais des Nations

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

A warm welcome back to the Palais des Nations! Allow me to first of all thank UNMAS and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for once again organizing this important conference.

The theme this year – “Advancing Protection, Peace, and Development” – neatly encapsulates the multi-dimensional benefits of the work performed by the brave women and men of mine action who risk their lives to remove the deadly remnants of war.

The theme is also fitting because it firmly embeds your work within our ambitious reform efforts across the UN system to better integrate our peace and security architecture along the continuum of humanitarian action, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

By being relevant to all three of these elements, mine action is a critical contributor to any integrated effort towards lasting peace:

First, it offers tangible protection to civilians in a humanitarian emergency – to those who contribute least to the threat, but who often pay the highest cost and suffer the gravest loss.

Second, in the words of our Secretary-General, peace without mine action is incomplete peace, because mines perpetuate the fear of dying even after the fighting stops. But mine action does more than completing the peace; it supports achieving it in the first place: across the world, from Colombia to the Sudan, mine action serves as a vital confidence building measure.

Finally, although there may not be a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal for mine action, the removal of mines and explosive remnants of war lays the foundation for durable recovery and sustainable development: land can be farmed, roads reopened, schools attended and livelihoods earned. In short, lives can return to normal.

The mine sector may be but a small part of the entire humanitarian and development universe, but it is essential to the success of everyone working within it. You have achieved significant progress in the past decades, not least by collaborating effectively across silos, connecting governments, civil society, and no less than 12 different UN funds, programmes and agencies.

Much as we celebrate your success, however, now is not the time to be complacent. Complex and protracted conflicts across the world still result in an appalling number of lives lost, villages destroyed, and whole swaths of land left uninhabitable.

With the wide range of expertise in this room today, I am confident your discussions over the next days will be guided by this awareness. You have what it takes to innovate, collaborate and implement solutions that will save countless more lives.

I salute all of you for the important work you do every day, and wish you success in your deliberations.

Thank you very much.