

Summary Report

26th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers

22-23 June 2023

Mine Action Cannot Wait

Overview

The 26th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN26), co-hosted and co-organized by the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), took place on 22 and 23 June 2023 in Geneva with the generous support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The meeting took place in-person only, at the World Meteorological Organization following the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional Meetings.

Over 350 participants attended the meeting, comprising national directors of mine action programs, representatives of mine action centres, United Nations advisers, donor representatives, academics, and civil society from more than 100 countries and territories.

The organisers prioritised gender and geographical balance for the 24 speakers that presented in plenaries; women represented 55% of plenary session speakers, while seven representatives of affected countries and territories, including National Directors, were panelists across the five plenary sessions and many more spoke during the fourteen side events of the meeting. NGO and civil society representatives were included as subject matter experts during plenary sessions, expanding perspectives.

Feedback from the post-conference survey shows that 97% of responders rated the logistical and organisation arrangements of the meeting between excellent and good. The same percentage deemed the plenaries as either excellent or good. The plenary on "*Mine Action, Climate, and Environment*" was the most appreciated, with 90% rating it excellent or good.

This year's side events presented a wide range of topics which were rated as either good or excellent by 85% of survey respondents. From "*Path to Completion for Mine Action in Sri Lanka*", to "*Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Mine Action*", "*Progress Towards the UN Mine Action Strategy and a Look at Sector-wide Initiatives in Monitoring and Evaluation*," there was a plethora of insightful discussions. The best-rated side event was "*Seeing is Believing*" (*Humanity and Inclusion with NPA, Mobility Robotics, GICHD, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the*

Netherlands)" with 48% of survey respondents who attended the session rating it excellent and another 40% rating it good.

Opening ceremony

During the opening ceremony, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of UNOG, highlighted the accomplishments of the mine action sector and emphasised the need for broader efforts to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ambassador Thomas Gürber, Deputy State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, expressed a strong commitment to achieving a world free of mines and underscored the importance of collaboration and the adoption of new technologies in protecting civilians. Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Chair of the IACG-MA, introduced by Mr. Alexandre Zouev, ASG for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, emphasised the significance of maximising mine action efforts and commended the sector for its perseverance, innovation, and dedication to building partnerships for a safer and more secure world.

The opening segment concluded with an inspirational speech by Mr. Robert Piper, Special Advisor of the United Nations Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, who highlighted the integral role of mine action in assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly women and children, and their disproportionate vulnerability. He noted the need for sustained government intervention and the transformation of efforts into a more holistic effort. Mr. Piper also drew attention to the alarming increase in the number of internally displaced persons, currently standing at 71 million, largely unseen by governments and policymakers. He stressed the importance of finding pathways to move people out of displacement more swiftly and shifting from a reactive response to a proactive prevention approach with greater government engagement. He expressed his delight in the commitment of UNMAS to the Action Agenda and called for closer collaboration and new approaches to finding solutions. Mr. Piper urged participants to prioritise displacement solutions in their national development plans, advocate for change, engage their UN Resident Coordinators and speak up for victims.

Concluding the ceremony, Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the GICHD, and Ms. Ilene Cohn, Director of UNMAS, reiterated the urgency of mine action, emphasising the theme of the meeting "*mine action cannot wait.*"

Plenary 1: Mine Action Enabling Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons

During this session, the discussion focused on mine action's role in achieving durable solutions for displaced persons, considering the significant impact of anti-personnel mines and explosives on civilians who are forced to leave their homes and belongings. The panellists highlighted examples of explosive ordnance found in IDP camps and emphasised the importance of community resilience and IDP registration. They underscored that mine action is both an obstacle and an enabler in this process and plays a crucial role in empowering communities. In Iraq, international partnerships were discussed as essential for addressing these issues early. Restoring agency to affected individuals and communities was highlighted as a central goal, emphasising the significant role that governments play in leading mine action efforts. The transition from a humanitarian to a government-led approach requires strong government leadership, which is crucial for achieving large-scale impact.

Discussions also emphasised the need for mapping and management of risks. It was noted that displaced people themselves can often drive the agenda faster than we can keep up with them, so it is crucial to respect their perspectives while ensuring they have the necessary information to make informed decisions. Additionally, each individual's risk calculation is unique, and it is important to shift from a risk management model to an agency model. In the case of Iraq, conveying risks to local communities, such as the booby-trapped bodies of ISIS fighters in Mosul, was highlighted as essential. The discussions emphasized the importance of enabling those forced to leave their homes to return with dignity and respect, knowing they can resume their normal lives.

Plenary 2: Mine Action, Climate, and the Environment

An inaugural topic for an NDM plenary, this session explored the relationship between mine action, climate change, and environmental protection. The discussions analysed various forms of contamination caused by mines and explosive ordnance and explored future strategies for improving ecosystems through mine action.

The panelists emphasised the responsibility of the mine action sector in reducing climate change impacts and protecting the environment. They discussed the importance of incorporating environmental considerations into national standards and shared practical examples of measures implemented at different stages of mine action operations. The panel also addressed the barriers and challenges to progress in this area. Additionally, they presented a vision of the positive contributions mine action can make to environmental safeguarding and climate resilience.

The panelists stressed the need to integrate robust community liaison efforts into survey and clearance operations to ensure community needs are considered. They highlighted the importance of centring climate resilience efforts on national and local communities, as different communities face distinct challenges due to changing weather and climate variability. Mine action operations can provide valuable insights into the impacts of climate variability on communities, assisting in planning climate resilience measures for affected areas. The panel concluded by affirming the vital role of humanitarian mine action in promoting climate resilience and building a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

During the Q&A session, participants discussed how environmental protection could be prioritised in programming. They highlighted that although there may be greater short-term costs, the long-term savings and benefits make it a worthy investment. The GICHD and UNMAS emphasised the need to adopt a holistic approach and incorporate environmental considerations into programming. UNMAS expressed its commitment to being part of the broader initiative of "greening the blue," aligning with the organisation's commitment to environmental sustainability. Additionally, the importance of considering environmental factors before, during, and after clearance operations was stressed as a crucial step toward improvement and aligning actions with principles. In closing, UNMAS reminded participants of the words of the Secretary-General on climate change, "There is too much at risk for us to sit on the sidelines. Now must be the time for ambition and action."

Plenary 3: Liability in the Land Release Process

This session highlighted the importance of legal frameworks in supporting mine action activities and ensuring the protection of actors involved and communities affected by them. The discussion revolved around liability issues and the responsibilities and obligations of different stakeholders at various stages of the land release process, including the transition to the residual phase of mine action programs. Participants expressed concerns about the need for more clarity regarding liability, especially in national standards that vary across countries. The panel explored the topic of liability from the perspectives of mine action authorities, NGOs, and donors.

Panelists discussed a range of issues and initiatives related to liability. For example, the Solomon Islands shared their efforts in strengthening legislation and implementing strict safety

procedures to address concerns such as dynamite fishing. The United States emphasized the importance of defining liability in land release and the responsibility of donors to ensure adherence to national and international standards. Cambodia raised concerns about the lack of clear references to liability in their national standards and emphasized the need for clarification on who is responsible and how. Serbia highlighted the establishment of an effective quality management system, while FSD emphasized the importance of accurate and detailed reporting, compliance with IMAS, and demonstrating adherence to necessary standards.

During the Q&A session, topics such as insurance for all parties involved, responsibilities in case of accidents after meeting all requirements, and the role of landowners were discussed. The need for enforcement after land release and the commitment of various stakeholders to ensuring liability were also mentioned.

Plenary 4: Fulfilling the Rights of Survivors, from immediate Responsive Care to an independent, Dignified Life

This session addressed two fundamental challenges faced by direct victims of explosive ordnance. First, survival rates were discussed, highlighting that one in three persons involved in an explosive ordnance accident does not survive. The Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR) partnered with the University of Washington to develop best practices for trauma care in low-resource settings, from the point of injury to definitive care at health facilities. Second, the panelists focused on rebuilding the lives of survivors.

The panelists discussed initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between the normative regime on victim assistance and the lived experiences of individuals coping with severe impairments in conflict and peacebuilding situations. Key messages included the vital role of information management, analyzing disaggregated casualty data, and sharing data with health actors. Strengthening local response by training first responders, such as deminers and medics, was emphasized, and the MA sector was recommended to act as implementing partners for WHO's Community First Aid Responder training. The importance of the MA sector's role in policy implementation and advocacy for human rights in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was highlighted.

The discussions also touched upon case studies, including a rising trend in case fatalities, the importance of timely care, and the focus on marginalized groups through the Chain of Civilian Casualty Care (CCCC) framework developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The panelists emphasized the significance of promoting equal opportunities and representation of persons with disabilities at all levels, as exemplified by Uganda's comprehensive action plan. They also stressed the need for risk education and community awareness, as well as the provision of psychosocial support to address the psychological impacts of landmines on individuals, particularly children and those in transition from childhood to adulthood.

The Q&A session included questions on first aid training, transportation capacity, the implementation of the CRPD, and coordination among organizations. Giles Duley delivered a call to action, urging the humanitarian community to engage in larger discussions, improve communication and collaboration, and ensure that mine action becomes a cornerstone in supporting survivors to live full and meaningful lives.

Plenary 5: Innovation in Mine Action Cannot Wait

During this session, the discussion centered on the barriers to widescale adoption of new technologies and the role of national directors in driving innovation in mine action.

Nigeria shared its history of mine action efforts and highlighted challenges related to climate and bureaucracy, as well as aligning with donor priorities. The country also showcased its innovative use of new technologies, such as mounting them on drones and exploring other innovative ways to enhance Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE). Nigeria emphasized the importance of empowering mine action operations through the establishment of the National Mine Action Center (NMAC), expanding membership of mine action committees across multiple government ministries and mine action entities, and enhancing coordination efforts.

Mobility Robotics, experts in unmanned aerial systems contracted by Humanity and Inclusion, GIS/remote sensing, and mine action, emphasized the significance of evidence-based and field-driven approaches in adopting new technologies and overcoming skepticism. Although there are always limitations based on time and money, they expressed their openness to challenges and emphasized that innovation should serve as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. New technologies were described as tools to achieve specific goals.

UNICEF presented digital solutions aimed at empowering survivors of gender-based violence through the [Laaha platform](#). They showcased leaflets with QR codes and the application of human-centered design principles. UNICEF also emphasised collaboration with the Finnish gaming industry to gamify their platform, making it more engaging and accessible in multiple languages, including English, Arabic, Kurdish, Spanish, and with plans to expand to Dari, Pashto, French, and Ukrainian by 2025. The platform aims to transform voices into actionable outcomes and was proposed as a potential model for mine action victim assistance or EORE.

UNOPS stressed that innovation must lead to positive change, which can manifest itself as a process or a strategy. Innovation is not solely reliant on technology, but also linked to behavior and the harnessing of human potential. It is powerful to implement incremental changes and UNOPS highlighted that crucial aspects of an innovation journey should include incentivising human ingenuity, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and providing evidence to support innovative practices.

Overall, the plenary emphasized the need for evidence-based and field-driven approaches to support the adoption of new technologies, the potential for digital solutions to empower mine-affected communities, and the importance of fostering a culture of innovation that goes beyond technology alone. Innovation is a path for continuous improvement and was viewed as a powerful means to enhance mine action efforts and pave the way for positive and transformative changes in the sector.

Access to all audio and video from the plenaries is available [here](#).

Side Events

1. Path to completion for Mine Action in Sri Lanka – NMAC Sri Lanka

The side event focused on the National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023-2027 adopted by Sri Lanka with the support of GICHD and mine action stakeholders. It was based on these objectives: land release and explosive ordnance risk education, coordination and national ownership, management of residual contamination, and staff transition.

2. Status of Mine Action in Southeast Asia 50 year after the Paris Peace Accord and 25 years after the APMBC entered into force – what is the path towards completion – UNDP with the NMAA in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Lao PDR

This side event reflected on mine action achievements and lessons learned in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam) 50 years after the Paris Peace Accord and after more than 30 years of HMA in the region.

3. IMAS: What's New – GICHD

This side event presented what's new and upcoming in IMAS. It was divided into three sections: first, it looked back at which IMAS have been released in the past 12 months, second, it looked forward to which IMAS are in the pipeline and being developed, and third, it considered the latest resources available to support the use of IMAS.

4. Partnering for Impact – UNOPS

UNOPS Peace and Security Cluster and its implementing partners showcased best practices and lessons learned from the management and delivery of humanitarian mine action projects in complex environments across over 20 countries and territories. An interactive discussion featured case studies, delivered by partners, about 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.

5. Operational Efficiency in Mine Action: Unpacking Key Performance Indicators – GICHD

Efficient land release operations are crucial to leveraging limited resources for maximum results. This can be done by measuring operational efficiency using key performance indicators and adapting operations accordingly. Using findings from the 2023 GICHD Operational Efficiency in Mine Action Study as a frame, this side event looked at defining efficiency in land release operations, the various KPIs analyzed, what kind of information they can tell us, and key recommendations that arose from the study.

6. Mine Action challenges and National Response – Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The side event considered various aspects of mine action, in particular the needs of women and men, girls and boys in mine risk education, humanitarian demining, and victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration, along with diversity and inclusion considerations and their importance for sustainable peace, security, and development.

7. The EWIPA Political Declaration and ERW – Practical Aspects of the Political Declaration and How to Support/Advocate for Adherence to Commitments therein – ODA, UNICEF, and the EWIPA Coordination Cell

UNMAS, ODA, UNDP and UNICEF discussed in greater detail the practical aspects of the Political Declaration, its intent to mitigate humanitarian impact including through clearance, risk education and victim assistance, and delve into how national directors, UN, ICRC, NGOs, and others can support governments in joining or adhering to the Political Declaration.

8. EORE: Paradigm Shift to Universal Prevention and Social-Behavior Change – UNICEF with the EORE Advisory Group

UNICEF focused on the global overhaul of EORE programming through the adoption of universal prevention and SBC approaches in the sector. This will be done by highlighting the work of national authorities and relevant operators, perhaps focusing on Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and Ukraine.

9. Lebanon Case: Overcoming Challenges in Times of Uncertainty – LMAP, UNDP, Netherlands, and GICHD

The side event will highlight the progress the Lebanon Mine Action Program (LMAP), a strong nationally owned program, in achieving its strategic goals despite facing significant challenges, both nationally and beyond. In addition, the event will provide an opportunity for attendees to learn about LMAP's Strategic goals and how they can contribute to the organization's efforts.

10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Mine Action: Where Do We Go from Here – UNMAS, UNOPS and the Gender and Diversity Working Group

The focus of this session was to reflect on the goals set in NDM-UN24 and NDM-UN25 and continue the conversation around successes and challenges faced. The mine action sector should stay focused on fighting racism and inequality, while broadening its scope through an intersectional lens to include disability and gender to the dialogue. Together speakers championed the successes made and highlight the room for growth.

11. Meeting Clearance Needs in Fragile Environments and Legacy Contexts – The Halo Trust

Key lessons and reflections on sustaining long-term clearance programming were shared with NDM attendees, drawing on HALO's extensive experience of working in conflict and post-conflict countries. Insights from Europe, Middle East and the Horn of Africa were provided.

12. Mine Action in the Nexus Debate – Why Local Approaches are more Sustainable and Effective – Danish Refugee Council and the Permanent Mission of Denmark

This side event explored how humanitarian mine action efforts fit into the Humanitarian, Disarmament and Peacebuilding (HDP) Nexus debate, showcasing how locally driven and nationally initiated clearance, victim assistance and risk education are more context-driven, sustainable and effective while taking a unique role in all three elements of the Nexus.

13. Seeing is Believing – The Power of Small Drone Mapping for Land Release – Humanity and Inclusion with NPA, Mobility Robotics, GICHD and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

This side event shared lessons learned from mapping many millions of square meters of confirmed hazardous areas, covering a range of explosive devices. There is no generic hazard area, hence sharing specific examples according to local contexts with a focus on real-world scenarios from Iraq and Ukraine. The focus of this side event was on methodology, not technology - where in most cases off-the-shelf hardware and software have been used for solutions that are affordable, scalable, user-friendly and can be operated by existing HMA personnel within current team structures.

14. Progress Towards the UN Mine Action Strategy and a Look at Sector-wide Initiatives in Monitoring and Evaluation – UNMAS, UNICEF, MAG and Itad

As part of the UN's annual reporting on progress and global trends related to the UN Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023, the side event offered an exchange on several sector-wide initiatives and developments related to M&E, with a view to discuss challenges and opportunities these afford stakeholders across the sector.