

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mine action demonstrates what is possible when the international community comes together against a known threat. For many decades, landmines buried around the world – from Cambodia to Angola and Afghanistan – have killed and injured thousands of people each year. But concerted action led the multilateral system to take a stand. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention of 1997 and other crucial frameworks have saved thousands of lives and are a testament to our common humanity. Today, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic, we can take heart from the global success of mine action.

The present annual report for 2019 is a reminder of the steady work that the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) undertakes every day – despite the risk of death and injury – on behalf of all the citizens of the world.

I have seen for myself how UNMAS clears the road – sometimes literally – for humanitarians, peacekeepers and peacebuilders, and lays the foundation for stability and sustainable development. There are myriad ways in which mine action supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, from helping displaced persons return home, to converting minefields into playing fields, and breaking gender barriers by training women as deminers.

The death toll from explosive ordnance continues to rise, due in part to the urbanization of conflict and an increase in the use of improvised explosive devices. UNMAS must be equipped and resourced to respond through a needs-driven approach. I commend the efforts of this unique Service which is doing critical work for peace and sustainable development.

The successes of mine action show how we can achieve the seemingly impossible when we work together towards common goals. That is a valuable lesson for all, as we focus on suppressing the transmission of COVID-19 and recovering from its impact.



UN Photo/Mark Garten

António Guterres,
United Nations
Secretary-General