

**22nd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations
Advisers (#NDM-UN)
Step Up for Mine Action
5 – 8 February 2019, Palais des Nations, Geneva
Chair’s Summary**

The 22nd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN) took place from 5-8 February 2019 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 700 delegates registered for the meeting, comprising National Directors of mine action programmes, United Nations advisors, donor representatives, academics, civil society and the private sector from more than 70 countries and territories. This annual meeting aims to bring together the full range of stakeholders from across the sector to review challenges and progress, exchange best practices and lessons learnt. Eight National Directors of mine action programmes participated in panels and many more presented at the 18 side events held throughout the week.

The meeting was opened with an inspiring keynote address by Giles Duley, a photojournalist and survivor, who challenged delegates to not just save lives, but ensure survivors “get their lives back”. This year’s meeting reflected the focus on victim assistance and inclusion of survivors; with two plenaries, four side events and a press conference on victim assistance and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Three survivors participated in plenaries and side events; Dr. Mahpekay Sidiqy, a physical therapist from Afghanistan and Mr. Aziz Haidar, President, Saharawi Association for the Victims of Mines as well as Giles Duley.

The organizers prioritised gender and geographical balance across plenary and side event panels, with the progress in this area being noted by many, in person and in the online post-conference survey. All plenary sessions featured men and women, and in line with the Secretary-General’s commitment to youth, the panel on the role of women and youth in mine action featured two young women, one Somali woman who works in mine action in her home country and one who is leading the ‘Mine Action Fellows’ programme that supports 20 young women working in mine action across the world.

The post-conference online survey provided valuable feedback on the dates, venue and substance of the meeting. For example, over 90% noted that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the dates and venue of this year’s meeting, with an ongoing appreciation for the simultaneous interpretation offered. As for the length of the meeting, 80% rated this as “just right” and the balance of plenaries and side events received positive feedback. This year the reception was held at the closing rather than on the opening night, which received mixed feedback from delegates.

Regarding the substance of the meeting, the plenaries were rated excellent or good by 59-84% of respondents, with the opening ceremony being the highest rated and attendance in the sessions being fairly consistent across all four days. Side events were rated excellent or good by 47- 82%. Access to presentations and audio from plenaries, as well as most side events is available [here](#).

Comments received via the survey provided insights into the value of the meeting for participants:

- *“The NDM was very informative and enriching for me as the National Mine's Coordinating agency in my country.”;*
- *“In general, it was really instructive, informative and useful. Lots of experiences and information have been exchanged among the participants and lessons learned.”*
- *“Great opening - love to Giles! But hope to see the work on VA not a theme but action! More inclusion would be great, include more survivors in the panels!”*
- *“I encourage all mine action actors to attend this meeting for exchange of knowledge, experiences and coordination.”*

Plenary One: Mine Action Vision - Forging the Future Together

As this meeting was the forum for launching the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023, this plenary brought together the United Nations, donor and affected states to discuss their respective strategies for mine action and identify synergies and opportunities for enhanced partnerships. The discussion highlighted how mine action actors, including affected states, donors and the United Nations, have evolved globally in the same direction, particularly prioritising coherence, efficiency and transparency through increased focus on monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, speakers noted the increased appreciation of the full scope of mine action, beyond ‘demining’ to mine/ERW risk education, victim assistance and information management.

Plenary Two: Facing the Challenges of Victim Assistance in Today's Conflicts

This plenary brought together representatives from the perspectives of academia, health and a national mine action authority to discuss the challenges of victim assistance in today's conflict's, which are increasingly protracted and urbanized. The panel all agreed that, in most contexts, the resources available for victim assistance were woefully inadequate, particularly in contexts of ongoing conflict, where health services are already under strain and lack of employment opportunities is a chronic problem. Additional challenges included the lack of data and coordination. It was highlighted positively that, small resources and adjustments can make a big difference in the area of victim assistance.

Plenary Three: Turning Intention to Action for Survivors

Following on from the previous plenary which identified the key challenges for victim assistance, this plenary presented good practices across the spectrum of responses and services including emergency healthcare, psycho-social treatment and rehabilitation as well as the opportunities for development, improved livelihoods and social inclusion. Country-specific case studies were presented by the National Directors of Cambodia and Tajikistan. The co-chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Psycho-social Support presented on how such services can be most effectively linked with other rehabilitation.

Plenary Four: Building Stronger Communities - Youth and Women in Mine Action

This plenary highlighted the way in which increasing the inclusion of youth and women in mine action not only improves the effectiveness of mine action programmes, but also have broader transformative effects within communities. This panel was notable for the power and passion conveyed by the two young female panellists who provided incisive challenges to delegates; noting that there is never a

need for a panel promoting the role of men in mine action.

Plenary Five: Preventing Humanitarian Crises, Building Peace

This panel discussed the role of mine action in preventing the humanitarian crises caused by conflict; this included field case studies from contexts where mine action has protected civilians and saved lives in the midst of complex conflicts. The panel further discussed how mine action can support the development of sustainable peace in the aftermath of conflict, with an intervention from the floor from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations who further emphasizing how mine action is a critical part of peace agreements.

Plenary Six: A Safer Tomorrow for Children

Globally, children are the most at risk from landmines and other explosive hazards; this panel aimed to explore how to reduce the rate of child casualties and improve the support available for child survivors. A joint presentation from the Co-Chairs of the Mine Action and Child Protection Areas of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster highlighted the steps taken to increase coordination and collaboration in this area. The UNICEF Yemen presentation reflected some of the challenges of operating amidst ongoing conflict, while the National Director of Sri Lanka's Mine Action Centre demonstrated how tailored, integrated approaches can radically reduce the casualty rate.

Plenary Seven: Mitigating New Threats – Bridging the Gaps

One of the major emerging challenges for mine action actors today is the proliferation of new and complex improvised explosive devices, which cannot be detected and safely destroyed using traditional mine clearance approaches and equipment. The UN SMART IED Threat Mitigation Roadmap was presented as a forum for bringing together national experts, NGOs, the scientific community and the UN to improve the response to these deadly weapons. Furthermore, the representatives of France and the Netherlands highlighted the steps their respective Governments have taken to tackle this growing threat.

Innovations in Mine Action

In addition to the plenaries, the meeting once again featured two fast-paced round-ups on innovations in the field, presented by those developing and using them. The innovations topics varied from IED threat mitigation in Mali, to virtual reality to adaptations for accelerating mechanical clearance of destroyed buildings in Iraq.

Side events:

- **Mine Action in Somalia: Towards Victim and Disability Assistance:** a recent study provides clarity on how victim assistance related treaty obligations can be fulfilled through humanitarian mine action in the context of wider disability assistance programme.
- **South to South Cooperation in Humanitarian Mine Action: A Step Forward in National Ownership:** national mine action authorities and regional centres play a critical role in supporting the emergence of national/regional expertise to respond to the impact of explosive ordnance contamination, including victim assistance.

- **Weapon Contamination and the Recovery of Human Remains:** mine action operators are increasingly requested to provide technical support in the search for and management of human remains in mine/ERW contaminated contexts. The panel examined the challenges and the best practices that should apply when operators assist in such activities.
- **Improving Disability Inclusive Programming in Humanitarian Mine Action - Good practices and Lessons Learned:** operators and national authorities shared lessons learned and best practices on developing disability-inclusive programming across all pillars of mine action through three categories: programme management, project design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- **UNOPS: Meeting the Challenge Together - Implementing Projects in Complex Environments:** presentation on UNOPS procurement and contract management processes, highlighting lessons learned, trends and updates in the UNOPS approach to ensure delivery of activities in complex environments.
- **Mine Action in Sri Lanka: Best Practices and Lessons Learnt:** National Mine Action Centre shared best practices and success stories and challenges on mine action in Sri Lanka.
- **Across the UN: Challenges and Responses to IEDs:** IEDs are increasingly impacting the UN across all mandate areas - from humanitarian responses to promoting sustainable development. The panel discussed the evolving threat environment caused by IEDs, explored how IEDs impact the different roles and mandates of the UN, and identified commonalities and priorities from which to build a “whole of UN” approach.
- **Linking Mine Action and Development through Research and Policy Support:** a discussion on how to practically communicate the impacts of mine action through systematic socio-economic research studies linked to humanitarian and/or national development priorities.
- **Virtual Worlds for Real World Action:** Virtual reality, mixed reality and augmented reality - together known as “XR” - are transforming all sectors, including mine action; four new XR products were presented and benefits explored, as well as the challenges and impact of using these new technologies as part of their daily operations.
- **Healthcare and Explosive Violence: Observations from Civil Society:** since 2011, explosive violence has reported to have killed at least 82,418 civilians, and injured a further 149,474, in some 119 countries. This side event looked at the short- and long-term implications of such violence on health outcomes and provision, with presentations from civil society and physicians.
- **Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse Workshop:** The Gender and Mine Action Programme presented preliminary findings and consulted stakeholders on their needs and expectations for development of guidance on prevention against sexual exploitation and abuse for the mine action sector.
- **Protecting Civilians from a Human Rights Perspective:** case studies from Afghanistan and other affected countries illustrate the challenges of landmines, ERW and IEDs, showcasing the physical, social and psychosocial impact of these weapons.
- **Emerging Technology for Mine Action in the Context of Displacement:** various modern technologies, such as precise UAV detection, efficient digital management tools and risk education can help mitigate these risks.
- **How to Engage with Armed Non-State Actors on Humanitarian Mine Action - The Practical Case of the Deed of Commitment in Western Sahara:** Geneva Call Deed of

Commitment is a practical tool, which allows engaging parties to the conflict in dialogue on their IHL obligations.

- **Evaluation of the UK's Global Mine Action Programme:** presentation of the findings of a recent evaluation of DFID's Global Mine Action Programme and reflections from partners.
- **Where's the Money Going?:** this Landmine Monitor side event unpacked the most comprehensive dataset on financing a mine-free world and the strategies of major donors.
- **Why Does National Capacity Development (NCD) Matter in Mine Action?:** approaches and lessons learned in the development of national mine action capacities.
- **UNOPS: Meeting the Challenge Together - Implementing Projects with Impact:** presentation of the sustainability and quality aspects of the UNOPS procurement process, in particular the UNOPS revamped case study template. Further topics included activities in promoting gender and diversity, environmental protection and others.

