



**Buantoscáireacht na hÉireann
don Eagraíocht um Comhoibriú agus Slándáil san Eoraip**
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the
Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe

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Austria

Forum for Security Co-operation Security Dialogue - 24 Jan 2024

'Humanitarian Mine Action – Victim Assistance'

Ireland Statement

Thank you Mr Chair,

In the current climate of protracted and violent conflict, mine action is a specialised protection activity that cuts across all spheres of humanitarian action. Explosive hazards of all kinds are a serious threat to life, inhibit freedom of movement, put civilian infrastructures at risk and limit access to food, water, schools, hospitals and shelter. Also significantly, they jeopardise the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

A high percentage of landmines, anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war are not detonated leaving a live and deadly threat to civilians. Thus, actions that complement demining, such as mine risk education and victim assistance, are essential in helping to prevent accidental injury or death. Gender and child-sensitive approaches are also crucial to ensure effective and sustainable results. Including women's perspectives and comprehensive understanding of community concerns is vital to the success of this work. Women must be involved in mine action activities, from mine-clearance to planning, implementing and monitoring programmes.

While the primary humanitarian argument for mine action is saving lives and reducing human casualties, we must also appreciate that full access to services and markets contributes to recovery and reconstruction. The clearance of mine contaminated land in the post-conflict period re-opens potential for agricultural production, business development and access to cultural and heritage sites for tourism and so has a strong link to longer term socio-economic development.

Ireland's military support to Ukraine focuses solely on non-lethal assistance and we are committed to providing further support, such as for demining, in a manner that reflects Ukrainian needs. We are continuing to provide significant levels of direct humanitarian assistance through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism while also supporting and engaging with recovery and reconstruction efforts. We are supportive of efforts by the European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments in relation to humanitarian mine action and will continue to support strong action by the EU.

As part of the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine, Ireland's Defence Forces provided training in demining and mine clearance in conjunction with Cyprus in 2023. Further training and donation of demining equipment will be conducted in the coming months.

Mine Action is widely regarded as an important trust and confidence building measure in post-conflict contexts and is undeniably critical for post conflict restoration for safe communities and local environments. Without this, people and communities will always be at risk. Humanitarian Mine Action is the first stage in the restoration of mine contaminated areas in Ukraine, which will facilitate the reconstruction process. This is far from straightforward and may take years to complete, but must be conducted with the enhancement of the safety of the affected population as a critical priority.