



**UNMAS**



## Joint Press Release

United Nations Mine Action Service  
Jerusalem  
29 June 2016

### **EU CONTRIBUTES EUR 800,000 TO SUPPORT THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION SERVICE INTERVENTION IN GAZA**

**Jerusalem (29 June 2016):** The European Union (EU) has contributed EUR 800,000 to UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service) through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. This critical financial support from EU will enable UNMAS to continue protecting civilians and supporting reconstruction in Gaza. This funding is provided through the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), part of a new generation of instruments for financing external action, the IcSP focuses on crisis response, crisis preparedness and conflict prevention to better contribute to the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises.

Nineteen months after the end of the 2014 escalation of hostilities in Gaza, explosive remnants of war (ERWs) remain a persistent and significant threat to civilians and reconstruction operations in Gaza. Approximately 3,113 of the estimated 7,000 items of ERW left behind by the 2014 conflict are known to have been cleared and destroyed by UNMAS and the Civilian Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams. Despite these significant clearance efforts, 16 people have been killed and 97 injured, including 48 children, in accidents involving ERWs since 2014. UNMAS continues to work closely with UNICEF and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to reduce these accidents through the widespread delivery of ERW risk education in the entire Gaza Strip.

In addition to posing a risk to limbs and life, ERWs buried in the rubble threaten reconstruction efforts. UNMAS support enabled the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Rubble Removal project to clear approximately 1 million tonnes of rubble from areas with high levels of ERW contamination with zero casualties. In 2016, as reconstruction gathers momentum, UNMAS support – risk assessments, risk mitigation training, and 24/7 explosive ordnance disposal support – is crucial to ensuring the safe progress of an increasing number of projects in Gaza. In addition, UNMAS is working to complete the clearance of all known aircraft bombs buried deep under the surface, which, cause families to live in fear, and prevent much needed rehabilitation and reconstruction work from proceeding safely. UNMAS identified 128 sites with high likelihood of deep buried ERW and of these, to-date, UNMAS cleared 33 sites to allow for a safe reconstruction to commence.

*"The explosive remnants of past conflicts in Gaza represent a significant threat to all Gazans. They also are an impediment to efforts to rebuild homes, infrastructure and local businesses. Through its partnership with UNMAS, the European Union is supporting practical steps to save lives and facilitate recovery in Gaza"* said the **Deputy EU Representative David Geer**. "Such steps are, however, insufficient on their own. Real transformation in Gaza will depend on the lifting of restrictions on movement and access for goods and people and political progress allowing the Palestinian Authority to assume, once more, full responsibility in Gaza," he added

UNMAS has worked in the occupied Palestinian territories since 2009 and sent an emergency team to Gaza on 27 July 2014 at the request of the United Nations Secretary-General. During the conflict and in its immediate aftermath, UNMAS conducted 218 emergency deployments, surveying and clearing key infrastructure that was damaged or destroyed, including the Rafah Crossing and Gaza power plant. UNMAS cleared all schools affected by the hostilities at the request of UNRWA and UNICEF, allowing more than 250,000 children to return to studies soon after the end of hostilities. In addition, UNMAS has provided ERW risk education to 28,000 beneficiaries including internally displaced persons, teachers, engineers, construction workers, United Nations staff, humanitarian workers, and other at-risk populations.



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The EU has been an important and longstanding partner to UNMAS programmes in many countries. The Mine Action Service currently supports mine action programmes in Abyei (Sudan/South Sudan), Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur (Sudan), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and the Territory of Western Sahara (MINURSO). In the case of the occupied Palestinian territories, the EU and UNMAS will continue working hand in hand to support the reconstruction of Gaza.

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