



JAPAN DONATES US\$ 1 MILLION TO SUPPORT THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION SERVICE RESPONSE IN SYRIA

(1 April 2016. New York) Japan has contributed US\$1 million to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, enabling the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to carry out life-saving activities in Syria. The extensive use of explosive weapons during five years of conflict has left behind contamination from landmines explosive remnants of war (ERW), improvised explosive devices, artisanal mines, some of which are connected to booby traps, unexploded ordnance, and cluster munitions. There are currently an estimated 5.1 million people living in highly contaminated areas, with more than 2 million children directly exposed to the risk of explosive weapons. The deadly contamination is threatening humanitarian response operations and livelihood activities.

Sarah Marshall, Programme Manager for the UNMAS Syria Response, welcomed the generous contribution: “Japan has been a consistent supporter of mine action globally. 2016 is an important milestone for mine action in Syria, and with this contribution, Japan’s commitment to reducing the impact of explosive hazards on the people of Syria is clear.”

Despite immense challenges, mine action partners have already started making important progress and have destroyed 14 tonnes of ERW and cleared vital infrastructure, including three schools and a hospital in Kobane. Risk education projects are spread across Syria and in neighbouring countries targeting the refugee and displaced populations. In the latter half of 2015, partners reached 110,000 people in Syria and provided safety briefings to 166 United Nations and non-governmental humanitarian staff.

With this important contribution from the people of Japan, UNMAS will be able to expand these activities to include cluster munitions clearance and risk education activities in high-priority areas. While traditional clearance is underway in certain areas accessible to international experts, traditional approaches to clearance will not work across all areas. UNMAS has devised a non-explosive method to reduce this threat and will train national organizations remotely to survey and clear cluster munitions, particularly in agricultural areas.

The Japanese contribution will enable the training and deployment of 12 risk education teams and one cluster munition clearance team. An estimated 22,000 people will directly benefit from the risk education activities and approximately 300,000 people will be indirect beneficiaries in communities where cluster munition clearance will take place.

The UNMAS Syria Response Chief of Operations, Jes Lockett, said this contribution from Japan is timely: “We cannot wait for the conflict to be over before we act. This funding will help us save Syrian lives now.”

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