



PRESS RELEASE

UN Global Advocate visits active minefield in Cyprus, highlights need for continued efforts

Nicosia, 13 October - "I very much hope that I will be the first and last Global Advocate to see landmines on this beautiful island," stated the United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards, British actor Daniel Craig.

Craig is visiting Cyprus on a two day familiarisation visit with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), his first mission since his appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General as Global Advocate.

On Monday, Craig visited an active minefield, recently identified by the United Nations Mine Action Service, where he was briefed on mine clearance activities by Lieutenant Sovannara Leang who leads a twenty strong team of Cambodian peacekeepers from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), deployed with UNFICYP as part of an inter-mission co-operation agreement. The Global Advocate witnessed first-hand the difficult and risky work involved in manual demining and explosive ordnance disposal by the UN peacekeepers.

Having filmed years ago in Cambodia, Craig was familiar with the widespread contamination of mines found in that country and was impressed to see Cambodian de-miners offering their expertise to help the people and peace process in Cyprus.

"Witnessing the potential impact that mines can have on people and communities, years after the end of conflict, brings home the humanitarian importance of the UN's de-mining efforts in Cyprus. For these peacekeepers to take their expertise, gleaned over the last forty years in Cambodia, and make it available to the people of Cyprus, half-way around the world, is truly inspiring." he explained.

Craig also visited an area recently cleared of mines in the UN buffer zone and the UN protected area in Nicosia where he has been briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of Mission, Ms. Lisa Buttenheim and UNFICYP's Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Kristen Lund.

Over the last decade United Nations de-miners have removed over 27,000 landmines from the UN buffer zone in Cyprus. A total of 74 minefields or 9.7 square kilometres of land have been cleared throughout the buffer zone, to international mine action standards, set and monitored by the United Nations Mine Action Service. The cleared area can now be put to other productive use. Today it is estimated that thousands of landmines still remain in Cyprus and large areas of land could still be contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance.

"The fact that the UN Global Advocate chose to come to Cyprus for his first mission, at a time when demining demonstrates positive momentum in the peace process, is significant. His visit draws attention to the UN's long expressed goal of achieving a mine free Cyprus for all." said **SRSG Buttenheim**.

End.

Further information:

PHOTOS: <http://bit.ly/1Qnzx8a>

UNFICYP's role in demining: <http://bit.ly/1yJKPKu>

History of demining in the Cyprus buffer zone (UNDP): <http://bit.ly/1DtIQRp>

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