

## OAS Update

MASG Meeting, Geneva – February 2017

The Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional organization established in 1948 with the goal of encouraging sustainable peace, justice, solidarity, collaboration, integrity, and independence among the nations of the Americas. OAS advances this goal through activities related to four central pillars -- democracy, human rights, security, and development. Since 1992, the OAS General Assembly, through its annual resolutions, has expressed its enduring support for the goal of making the Americas a region free of antipersonnel landmines, in large measure through the Organization's Program of Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines, known as AICMA.

The AICMA Program channels international donor assistance for mine action to OAS Member States in order to provide financial, technical, logistical and administrative support for a wide range of mine action activities. AICMA has played a key role in enabling the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Suriname to declare their national territories free of the threat of landmines. The Program has also supported mine action building capacity in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well.

The principal focus for AICMA in the foreseeable future is the effort to assist Colombia's mine action program. Through over twenty-five years, Colombia has suffered severely as a result of the use of improvised landmines by illegal armed groups, leaving more than 11,000 victims and large parts of the country under this threat. Prompted by the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group in 2016, the government has initiated an expansive effort to define the scope of landmine contamination in the country and complete all clearance work by 2021. The AICMA Program continues to provide logistical support to humanitarian demining units of the Colombian armed forces, as well as to promote risk education in and liaison with communities where demining activities are taking place. AICMA also has a critical role as the nationally-designated body for evaluating demining organizations for accreditation, for monitoring humanitarian demining that is carried out by both military and civilian operators, and for inspecting cleared land for quality control. As demining capacity in Colombia continues to increase to meet demand for clearance in 2017 and beyond, the Program will undergo an accompanying growth in its logistical, monitoring and risk-education capacity.

The Global Initiative for Demining in Colombia has received strong donor backing that will be critical to meeting Colombia's mine action goals. In 2016 and 2017, the governments of Canada, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States have collectively committed some US 7 million dollars to Colombia through the OAS in order to promote these efforts. The AICMA Program wishes to acknowledge their generous contributions and will remain committed in future years to supporting the elimination of the landmine problem in Colombia.