

TURNING MINEFIELDS



INTO PLAYING FIELDS

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SAFE GROUND NEWS: A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHAMPIONS

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Safe Ground was launched in April 2019 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. António Guterres. Safe Ground is a global advocacy and fundraising campaign led and coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) through the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action with the support of an informal, voluntary group of Champions, comprised of governments (UN Member States), United Nations entities - including agencies and programmes - civil society organizations, sport federations, private sector companies, and individual athletes. This bi-monthly newsletter is written to keep Champions of Safe Ground informed.

GROUP OF FRIENDS OF SPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNMAS Director Agnès Marcaillou launched the Safe Ground campaign at the Group of Friend of Sport for Sustainable Development in mid-June. This group of United Nations Member States is chaired by the Ambassadors of Monaco and Qatar to the United Nations. Some 30 concerned Member States were in attendance, as was the Safe Ground Champion Maher Naser from the UN Department of Global Communications. The campaign was warmly welcomed and ambassadors from Bangladesh and Nicaragua reinforced the purpose of the campaign through their own experience harnessing sport to build communities and create inclusive societies.

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Safe Ground is one of the causes that the FIFA Women's World Cup accepted to promote. In preparation for this global tournament, a social media campaign (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube) dedicated to women's soccer was developed to be promoted between the 7 June and 7 July. FIFA is sharing parts of the campaign through their social media and may use one or two videos before matches. An array of assets was created for this targeted social media campaign, which can be found here: <https://trello.com/b/Da3g54Mp/safe-ground-fifa>

OUTREACH TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In July and August promotional material for private sector companies will be refined and Safe Ground will seek corporate donations. Working with and through the United Nations Office of Partnerships, funding from new partners will be sought to establish Safe Grounds and to assist victims/survivors of explosive ordnance.

CHAMPION EXPANSION

Safe Ground continues to attract many potential Champions. The Chief Executive Officer of Sorteer.com, Mr. Eric Draghi became a Champion in May and will bring the digital skills of his company to help promote the campaign in Phase One.

UNDP TAKING THE LEAD IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

UNDP as a Champion of Safe Ground exploring the establishment of Safe Ground projects in Cambodia and Vietnam. The UN country teams, with UNDP in the lead, are reaching out to local partners and seeking suitable terrain in communities plagued by explosive ordnance. Stay tuned.

CYPRUS SAFE GROUND

The Safe Ground project in Cyprus is advancing. UNMAS surveyed the site. Safe Ground Champion UNOPS helped facilitate a site visit by engineers from a regional office to draw up a project document; Safe Ground Champion UNDP has joined the team and will help with procurement; the World Sports Association also a Safe Ground Champion, has offered to provide sustainable turf for the soccer field that will be part of the sports complex and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cyprus, Champion Elizabeth Spehar and her Civil Affairs team, have met with officials at all levels from both sides of the island to ensure that the project is truly bi-communal and supported by political and civil society authorities. UNMAS and the UN peacekeeping operation in Cyprus have also worked on finding additional funding sources from the international community.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO SAFE GROUND

Since 1997, Shabunda, in the province of South Kivu, was the scene of armed conflict. As a result, the territory is contaminated by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), namely submunitions. Shabunda is an arable land and the population's main livelihood relies on mining and farming. Due to the fear that the threat of submunitions raised, the community stopped using the fields in the region. At the beginning of this year, with support from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), UNMAS deployed a Multi-Task Team to the region to conduct technical and non-technical surveys, clear contaminated areas, and destroy explosive devices. During these operations, more submunitions were reported near schools, homes, roads, fields and water sources. In one school, the Divin Maître Primary School, the UNMAS team found a PM1 submunition. The team successfully destroyed the ordnance and cleared the entire school site. Risk education sessions were conducted for the students and teaching staff. As a result, 530 students and teaching staff returned to Divin Maître and classes resumed. As a final measure, UNMAS established a Safe Ground in the school yard where students on 20 June 2019 held a sports tournament.

STATE OF PALESTINE SAFE GROUND

UNMAS has used sports to facilitate community engagement and mine risk education in the State of Palestine since it began working there. This year on 4 April a soccer tournament was held for girls, boys, men and women, some with disabilities. UNMAS is in talks with FIFA, in the context of the Women's World cup, to see if it is possible to organize an international Friendly between two World Cup women's teams in the West Bank in October 2019, to raise awareness about the long-term needs of those living with disabilities in the State of Palestine.

SOMALIA SAFE GROUND

Having cleared the football stadium in Mogadishu in 2018, Safe Ground will work with local authorities to use this arena and is seeking other areas that can be made into a Safe Ground, where young people can play again and the United Nations can promote the SDGs through sport-related events.

