

GICHD Highlights 2015

MASG, 17 February 2015

Anti-vehicle mines

The GICHD and SIPRI presented the study on the humanitarian and developmental impact of anti-vehicle mines at the Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in November 2014. It was welcomed as a source of evidence on the impact of these weapons and a number of States asked for a follow-up to it. Together with our partners in the field, we will continue gathering data on contamination and new accidents as the available data on anti-vehicle mines are far from being complete. Moreover, we will conduct a complementary research on the additional costs such contamination causes to relief organisations. A network on anti-vehicle mines, which brings together major mine action organisations, has been established to continue working on this issue.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

Reports by UN Secretary General have over the past years highlighted the concern over the humanitarian tragedies caused by using explosive weapons in populated areas. States, international and non-governmental organisations have since started to press for stronger policy and practice in this realm and to call for international standards that strengthen the protection of civilians. As part of these efforts, the GICHD has formed and chairs a technical expert group to characterize the effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The interim report of this study could serve as a background document to the next report of the UN Secretary General on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, to be released in spring 2015. This work is undertaken in close partnership with OCHA which is leading efforts in this context.

IMAS on underwater survey and clearance of explosive ordnance

A new IMAS on underwater survey and clearance of explosive ordnance was adopted in December 2014 and a new version of the IMAS on explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and a protocol on EOD competency standards was developed in January 2015. In addition the IMAS website was restructured to provide the mine action community with easier access to mine action standards and their translations. In 2015, IMAS on quality management, animal detection, and environment are planned to be revised.

Symposium on the management of residual contamination

In June, the GICHD will present findings from its global research project “Management of Residual Explosives” (MORE) at a symposium in Cambodia. The project looks at applying risk management methods to the threats posed by residual contamination. It involves 15 countries in Europe and Asia which manage long-term contamination from the two World Wars and more recent wars in Southeast Asia and aims to exchange experiences as well as distil lessons learned and good practices out of decade-long efforts in dealing with residual contamination. The symposium will convene and inform over 100 regional stakeholders, including governments of affected states, donor governments, military and police forces, national mine action centres, commercial clearance and construction companies, the UN and civil society. The ongoing research will also provide the platform for targeted policy workshops in select countries to assist the development of national strategies and standard operating procedures to address residual contamination.

Handover of the Arabic-language Outreach Programme

Recognizing the importance of regional ownership, the Arabic-language Outreach Programme (AOP) will gradually be handed over from the GICHD to the Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC) starting in 2015. The GICHD's role will, in the coming years, transit from a leader to a facilitator of the programme. The plans for the AOP for 2015 include three regional workshops: on mine action and the application of IMAS (Lebanon, 16 to 20 March), on accreditation of mine action (Croatia, 10 to 14 August) and on battle area clearance (Egypt, 31 August to 4 September). Moreover, the fourth annual conference will take place (Lebanon, 19 to 23 October), 20 IMAS will be translated into Arabic and the AOP website will be expanded.

Launch of the Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian Region (EECCA) Outreach Programme

In the EECCA region, 15 countries with Russian as an official language or as a de-facto working language are affected by mines or ERW (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). Upon request from several mine action programmes in this region, a linguistic outreach programme will be launched with a first regional workshop planned from 9 to 11 June 2015 in Kazakhstan. The purpose of the programme is to enhance regional co-operation through sharing of information and experience and to promote best practices throughout the region. The programme will assist national authorities, UN peace-keeping operations and international and regional organisations to build their own capacities in relevant areas by having access to material, training and advisory services in their own language.

Donor seminar

As in 2014, the GICHD will organize a donor seminar on mine action from 20 to 23 April 2015 in Geneva. Given the dynamic nature of mine action and based on requests from donors, the GICHD will deliver an introductory seminar on key mine action topics specifically for donor agencies involved in funding mine action-related activities. Given periodic staff turnover, and the reality that for many donors, mine action is one of several issues that they follow, this seminar is designed to provide a solid introduction to the key mine action issues of particular concern and interest to donors.