



**Statement of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action  
on the COVID-19 Response**

**27 May 2020**

COVID-19 has reached every corner of the world, affecting everything we do. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, it poses the greatest test that we have faced together since the formation of the United Nations.

It is in this context that the members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action call on all Member States, including donors and affected states, to work together with us to maintain national mine action capacity and address the dangers that explosive ordnance pose to affected communities, which are no less threatening in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As already vulnerable communities are hit hardest by the crisis, it is of crucial importance that mine action activities are continued to the extent possible in order to enable the provision of critical humanitarian assistance and access to health facilities.

Under WHO and other United Nations guidelines, and in response to national policies and measures, United Nations mine action personnel continue working with national, regional and local stakeholders to adapt and revise plans, maintain business continuity, including adapted service delivery, and retain core capacities to facilitate the resumption of planned activities as soon as national policies allow. Many programmes remain fully operational and have incorporated appropriate protective measures to prevent the spread of the virus; other programmes, though, have had to suspend or reduce activities due to movement restrictions.

Given the various restrictions put in place, United Nations entities alongside civil society and other partners involved in the delivery of mine action programming have intensified reliance on innovative and remote technologies to maintain activities and deliver on new priorities. For instance, the remote provision of mine action technical assistance to parties of peace agreements and the delivery of explosive ordnance risk education training to United Nations staff and partners, as well as the use of digital and radio platforms to engage with communities on risk education and behavioural change are being widely used. In many contexts, explosive ordnance and COVID-19 risk education messages have been integrated to maximize prevention and protection efforts against the virus.

To effectively adapt, we will need to collaborate. We call on all champions of mine action to stay the course, while providing the understanding and flexibility needed to respond to the ongoing and rapid shifts being experienced in the field.

As the world grapples to respond to COVID-19, the communities affected by explosive ordnance cannot be forgotten or left behind. Your sustained commitments will allow us to retain the capacity we have built together, as well as the expertise and innovation necessary for efficient United Nations assistance to those who need it the most. Moreover, your support will enable us to provide the stability that local mine action personnel and their families need more than ever in these dire economic times.

Our achievements have been hard won. Over the years, thanks to your engagement, United Nations mine action personnel and their partners have secured humanitarian access during complex crises, provided a foundation for stabilization and peacebuilding, and developed the capacities of national institutions while making life safer for men and women, boys and girls. We must prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from undermining decades of mine action. It is in hard times that human beings and institutions reveal their true DNA.

Let's continue to prevent and protect together.