

# **EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium**

*Promoting the European network of independent  
non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks*

## **Mine Action Donor Strategies – Lessons for the Revision of the EU Guidelines for Mine Action**

**Ad-Hoc Seminar of the  
EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium  
Wednesday 28 November, 2018  
Geneva**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Introduction**

In a context of mainstreamed and decentralised, and sometimes fragmented EU assistance for mine action, the European Union is in the process of revising its Mine Action Strategy, better known as the 'European Commission guidelines on Mine Action' that were adopted in 2008. The new European Commission to be formed after the May 2019 European elections, which is the main Mine Action contributor within the EU, will be invited to issue the revised guidelines. Representatives from states and organisations related to mine action – main donor countries, international organisations, affected countries and non-state operators – met in Geneva with a view to inspiring the revision and offering their views on ways to support mine action in an efficient and effective way.

Officials from six main donor states, the US, Japan, the UK, Norway, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands exposed their approach to financing mine action and their strategies to better leverage funding earmarked for mine action. Various approaches are being taken by donor states, which expressed different although interrelated perspectives on mine action, the

three prevailing perspectives being the humanitarian approach, the peace process / stabilisation approach and the development approach. Yet each of these approaches possesses varying layers and modes of action in terms of selecting priority countries, channels for funding – multilateral mechanisms or bilateral cooperation – as well as implementing partners. As such, several parameters must be considered to tailor mine action, touching upon various stakes associated with its effectiveness and efficiency. On these premises, other panellists added their own understanding and suggestions with regard to these overarching issues. Among them, representatives from four affected countries – Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Colombia – offered their views and expectations vis-à-vis external support in the field of mine action.

- First Panel – Presentation of National Mine Action Donor Strategies

**Motivating mine action:** Representatives from mine action main donor states exposed the motivations of their policies. Mine action is largely regarded as a pre-condition of human security and socio-economic development. Mines hamper freedom of movement including for humanitarian support but above all for refugees, displaced people and communities aiming at returning to their home. They also impede development. Several states also see mine action as aimed at fulfilling their legal obligations stemming from the Ottawa convention and other treaties. Besides this humanitarian development and legal vision on mine action, donor countries see mine action as a foreign policy instrument advancing their national interests abroad, especially where mine action contributes to the broader goal of stabilisation as in Syria and Iraq and building links with affected countries. In that regard, states rely on the country desks to provide feedbacks.

**Drafting mine action strategies:** They subsequently discussed methods to define mine action strategies. Donor states usually draft multi-year mine action strategies drawing from the experience of past years and drafted in collaboration with implementing partners and country desks in affected areas. Donor states tend to seek inputs from actors on the ground and the civil society. Mine action strategies can be part of broader national security and foreign policy strategies.

**Coordinating among stakeholders:** Donor states made the case for maximized coordination amongst national agencies, donors and actors on the field. Within the administration, states

usually seek to maximize synergies between services and to develop cross-cutting approaches in order to overcome the scarcity of resources. In the absence of an integrated budget line, the EU may establish coordination platforms involving the different strands of mine action (security, humanitarian aid, stabilisation, development) that stresses the intersectional character of mine action.

Even though most states express their interest in coordinating their action with other states and actors and consider coordination amongst donors as mature, coordination on the ground can be dysfunctional. The concept of country coalition, developed by the German presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, allows the development of partnership for sustainable strategic engagement.

**Selecting priority countries:** Several states unveiled the criteria they use to select priority countries. Varying criteria are used by donor countries to select priority countries, among which countries with legacy contamination as well as new contamination, although this dichotomy was described as irrelevant in countries like South Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan. The effectiveness of actors on the ground and the potential for consolidating national ownership, with an emphasis on good governance, are also cited as important factors. National interests also provide guidance in selecting countries. Main priority countries are Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Cambodia, etc... Beyond pre-selected priority countries, donor states also maintain funding for emergency situations, such as currently Yemen and Syria while ensuring synchronisation between their action.

Donors shared criteria which they apply in their assistance programming such as:

- The gross national income of mine affected country;
- Whether the country has joined the Mine ban Convention;
- The importance of indicators of national ownership, such as the availability of a national strategy and action plan, whether the necessary legislation is in place; the involvement and role of the armed forces in mine clearance, and the involvement of other national stakeholders.
- Transparency is an important indicator:
  - Are there regular briefings on progress to donors?
  - Are there public database on (suspected) contamination?
  - Are results measured and published?

- The level of Quality & Trust is also a very important factor in a donor-recipient relation:
  - Are terminology and procedures conform with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)?
  - Is there a proven track record of preventing & countering corruption

All these factors require a lot of capacity from the mine affected country. But also here donors can and does assist. The EU supports the individualised approach and other similar platforms for partnerships between affected States, donors, operators and other stakeholders. Such methods can help to ensure national ownership, improve donor coordination and tailor assistance to specific local needs.

**Channelling fundings:** Donor countries usually maintain several channels to deliver financial support to mine action, ranging from funds administered by their administrations in charge of international development or military affairs to funding channelled through international organisations and bodies, including the UN. Multilateral and bilateral approaches can be combined, although some states discard multilateral action and favour direct contact with operators on the ground. Development departments usually have a dedicated office or team and leverage various financial instruments, such as crisis engagement instruments, to allocate funding to mine action. The donors community may be enlarged by convincing potential state donors for instance through an emphasis on the humanitarian impact or their legal obligations.

**Prioritizing modes of action:** Donor states also offered their views on their privileged modes of action within the scope of mine action. Mine action refers to a broad array of activities including survey, clearance, victims' assistance, risk education and advocacy. While survey and clearance are regarded as effective modes of action and as such usually privileged by donors, several donor countries tend to limit funds allocated to victim assistance in their funding strategy. By contrast, states with a focus on the humanitarian approach tend to put an emphasis on victim assistance. Gender mainstreaming has been increasingly seen as an important aspect of mine action and is expected as such by donor states, including by enrolling women as operators and offering gender-sensitive and inclusive mine clearance education and training. Some states exclude victims assistance from their funding priorities. Overall, mine action on the field should be made visible as publicity provides incentives for states willing to join the donors community, while the absence of several prominent EU states

was underlined during the seminar. Several speakers need to thoroughly connect with national authorities and local authorities.

- Second Panel – Regional and Global Mine Action Strategies

**Drafting mine action strategies:** Representatives from the UN and the GICHD gave their views on the process of drafting mine action strategies. In drafting its policy, the EU may draw lessons from the experience of other organisations in reaching out to stakeholders. UNMAS has developed a five-year cross-service strategy through an extensively participatory and inclusive process that drew feedbacks and inputs from a broad array of actors and entities, including states and operators. The UN policy displays five strategic priorities: 1-Protection of individuals and communities 2-Victims assistance 3-Strengthening national ownership 4-Maintaining the momentum in favour of mine action 5-Promoting a people-centered and needs-driven approach. Based on this approach, the UN policy is highly centralised and features a theory of change as well as a strong Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism that ensures accountability and transparency while identifying the added value of UN action. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms specifically hinge on relevant measures of impact, seeking to identify outcomes and not only outputs, which can be mirrored in tailor-made action plans.

The GICHD also underlined the importance of strategic planning as an inclusive process, without which tangible impact is inhibited. Consensus on means and objectives should be sought for, with a view to promote the leadership role of national authorities of affected countries. Besides, strategies should be based on extensive context analysis and reviewed during the implementation process in order to recalibrate the action based on feedbacks from the ground. To guarantee the quality of the strategy, the GICHD uses a monitoring framework, which features an array of quality question addressing both the procedural and substantive aspects of such strategies. Overall, the issue of impact appears to be central, with some contributors underlining that beneficiaries' expectations are critical when defining impact. Overall, depending on the context, contributors stressed the need for an exit strategy which should refer to a desired end state. In that regard, the approach to development has evolved from assistance to partnership, the concept of national ownership being put forward by development actors as a precondition for the sustainability of development initiatives. Mine action too must be based on promoting and consolidating national ownership, grounded

on an emphasis on improved governance, as part of an exit strategy. It is especially important to assist countries throughout their strategic planning processes, where the foundations for implementation and M&E are laid. The GICHD in particular has partnerships with affected countries to support them in drafting their strategies and developed a Guide to Strategic Planning.

**Increasing efficiency and effectiveness of EU action:** The viewpoint of EU actors working in the field was exposed. In several countries, EU missions have developed strong and enduring partnerships with stakeholders, demonstrating the importance of decentralised approaches to mine action. With regard to funding mechanisms, the EU should also seek better internal coordination, as programme managers on the ground must navigate between various budgets and policies. Making the budget less earmarked and less specific seems to be an appropriate policy. In that regard, the EU will develop a new multilateral finance framework to reduce the number of funding instruments, with the European Parliament having a critical role in shaping this policy. Previous guidelines made the case for a unique cross-cutting mine action budget line but such a line has ceased to exist and contributors expressed their scepticism vis-à-vis the possibility to see mine action budget being integrated into a unique budget line.

- Third Panel – Donor Strategies: Perspectives from affected countries

The Afghan Chair started by emphasizing the importance of holding meetings between donor communities and affected countries. Afghanistan adopted a humanitarian approach, which takes mine action in the broader context of humanitarian needs. For instance, emerging challenges related to Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and improvised mines fall into the humanitarian dimension and must be addressed as such - even if, from a donor perspective, the approach can be different (supra).

**Taking a holistic approach to mine action:** From the viewpoint of affected states where conflicts are ongoing or recent, mine action must be conceived as a part of a broader conflict resolution and peacebuilding agenda encompassing various stabilisation and development initiatives. In Colombia, the national plan for development must be enacted into law by Parliament every four years, and as part of the planning process opened to civil society, demining action was included: it is linked at various levels with development processes

(engagement with victims, gender issues). In Afghanistan, mine action is a cross cutting issue, thus every ministry having a budget for mine action. Yet, other states struggle to integrate demining in more general stabilization and development processes, and further efforts should be dedicated.

**Promoting national ownership:** The issue of national ownership was raised several times throughout the seminar. With regard to coordination and national ownership, links with national authorities are critical, with some contributors underlining that national authorities should be in the lead. Affected states expressed their willingness to engage more with donors. Stakeholder analysis is essential to shape such partnerships. Affected states also underline the need for donors and operators to contribute to building national capacity to ensure mine action's sustainability. As underlined before, capacity-building hinges on long-term engagement, which is itself permitted only by long-term support from donors. National capacity development relies on various internal and external factors, is not as tangible as other impacts and is not a linear process. Yet it is an absolute necessity in practical terms, to ensure sustainability, and in legal terms, as affected states are responsible for delivering declarations of compliance under article 5 of the Ottawa Convention. Besides there are M&E methods for capacity development programmes, including by assessing increase in national contribution to mine action.

Other contributors underlined that although national authorities may assume a coordinating role, there are a few issues associated with it. In particular, the issue of access to information, as well as the lack of information management systems such as databases, has been raised as a potential factor hampering both coordination and efficiency of action. Information management and sharing mechanisms should be considered when drafting guidelines.

**Improving mine action:** Affected states provided sets of suggestions to increase efficiency of mine action, emphasizing the importance of impact measurement. Bosnia and Herzegovina works with the concept of land release.

In defining their strategies, donors should consult national mine action authorities to help empower them, and funds should be allocated for national capacity development.

**Attracting funding from private companies:** Private companies may be interested in mine action as part of their corporate social responsibility. The role of private companies developing activities in mine-affected regions was highlighted by participants. Some

companies have indeed worked on humanitarian demining. In Iraq, some companies benefited from areas clearance for their own activities (drilling) and others initiated corporate social responsibility and as such are a source of funding. As shown in the presentations, Angola and BiH also work with commercial entities to pursue demining.

The seminar also highlighted the **multiplier and catalyst effects** of mine action:

- In the field of reconciliation and confidence building between former enemies;
  - For the return of internally displaced persons;
  - For opening the door to marginalised groups and putting the issue of disability on national political agendas.
- 
- Fourth Panel – Donor Strategies: Perspectives from operators

Private contractors can be favoured in conflict-ridden areas. Some countries favour open tender procedures to select operators. As in Colombia and Afghanistan, the military and security forces can be directly involved in mine action when required by the security environment.

**Providing operators with flexibility:** Operators exposed their views on issues related to funding and the level of flexibility provided by donors. Funding allocated to mine action can represent independent budget lines or be included in broader budget categories in a more flexible approach. It is usually allocated on a multi-year basis in order to guarantee continuity. Multi-year funding is favoured by contractors who can develop enduring links with communities, make cost-efficient investments in training, invest in innovation and to more appropriately measure outcomes and impact. However, flexibility too should be provided. When directly allocating resources, donor states select contractors to conduct mine action activities. In such scenarios, operators receive guidance with regard to the use of funds but can also be provided with flexibility in setting their own priorities. Flexibility in the use of funds is perceived as way to stimulate innovation and R&D through the emphasis on indirect costs, which can also include security measures for operators in volatile security environments. It also allows swift intervention in crisis situations, as civilians tend to rapidly return to contaminated lands. Flexibility can also be provided through the use of light results frameworks, with reduced planning, monitoring and evaluation requirements, which implies



some level of risk acceptance. Some donors indicated that they systematically earmark 20% of their support for overhead to allow the implementer to absorb unexpected developments.

Several speakers underlined the benefit of a **dedicated mine action instrument** in order covers gaps between security, humanitarian, stabilisation and development action. Legacy explosive contamination with limited negative humanitarian or socio-economic impact risks falling of the table in case there is no dedicated mine action instrument. Several speakers warned that what is low-impact contamination now, in some cases risks turning into a humanitarian crisis tomorrow, because of floods moving the mines or because of refugees flowing into otherwise scarcely inhabited area's. In understand that there are cases like that in Lebanon today. *Panta Rhei*. Things change.

**Adapting to emerging operational contexts:** The experience of operators allowed to discuss challenges associated with the various types of devices covered by the Ottawa Convention as well as emerging contexts. Mine action deals with a broad array of explosive weapons, varying in sophistication. Mine action addresses mines and explosive remnants of war, regardless of the quality of manufacture (industrially manufactured or craft produced). There are specific challenges associated with improvised explosive devices, yet the increase in the use of improvised antipersonal mines is also an indicator of the Ottawa Convention's success: acquiring industrial antipersonal mines is getting harder. IEDs are not new and not necessarily complex but current IED action is taking place in new environments, on the edges of ongoing conflicts, while IEDs are increasingly used in urban environments, often to target civilians or mine operators themselves. As a result, clearance is more expensive because of security measures and slower. Risks associated with clearance are increasing and donors must reflect on the level of the risk they are willing to let operators take. Some states allocate money to pilote projects addressing challenges associated with IEDs. This topic also raised a debate on mine clearance semi-permissive environments and in the context of protracted conflicts where humanitarian principles risk to come under stress. In this regard all participants were looking forward to new IMAS standards on improvised mines and other IED's.