



Belgium Provides Additional USD 1.8 Million for UNMAS Activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 January 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 1.5 million (approximately USD 1.8 million) from the Government of Belgium that will play a pivotal role in supporting the Government of Iraq to assist those impacted by explosive ordnance. The Government of Belgium will contribute to strengthening national capacity in the mine action sector, thus enabling stabilization and humanitarian efforts through the support of explosive hazard management and delivery of life saving risk education messages to affected communities in the retaken areas of Iraq.

More than three years after the Government of Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), their presence continues to haunt innocent civilians, particularly through the swathes of explosive ordnance-contaminated land left behind in the wake of their defeat.

UNMAS is adapting its strategy to ensure optimum and sustainable support to the Government of Iraq, particularly through the focus of its assistance to sustainable national capacity inclusive of national authorities and national operators. As part of this strategy, UNMAS has rolled out a new partnership model bringing together international mine action organizations with local NGOs, paving the way for national ownership and localization of the mine action response in Iraq.

In addition, UNMAS is also advocating for gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity across all its activities as well as the overall mine action sector in Iraq. This means that UNMAS encourages the hiring and training of capable women and men from the community itself, providing critical livelihood opportunities to vulnerable communities.

“Belgium is very happy to continue its support for UNMAS activities in Iraq in the context of its policy of contributing to the stabilization of the country,” said Mr. Filip Vanden Bulcke, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Jordan and Iraq. *“We are very impressed with the results of recent clearance activities in spite of the pandemic, as well as UNMAS focus on strengthening national capacities in mine action and on gender mainstreaming. This approach will enhance ownership and strengthen local communities while achieving demining objectives.”*

“This generous contribution from Belgium will significantly further UNMAS mine action activities in Iraq, and will enable the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of displaced communities to their homes,” stated Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager. *“As the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to reverberate across the country, the additional support will also provide much-needed economic relief to struggling communities by providing access to lands previously contaminated by explosive ordnance that can be utilized for farming, grazing of cattle and other livelihood activities. I thank the Government of Belgium for their unceasing support to the mine action sector in Iraq.”*

Contact

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