



Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovakia Contribute More than USD 334,041 to Humanitarian Mine Action in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 September 2021 – Unexploded artillery shells, grenades, missiles and improvised explosive devices left behind by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), threaten the lives of civilians, and children in particular, in many parts of Iraq.

As a result, the continued threat of destabilization is substantially heightened through the presence of explosive ordnance in residential and rural communities. This ensures that a continued “de facto battle” exists, resulting in lives lost with no enemy in sight. The legacy of ISIL will continue to be a problem as long as explosive ordnance are scattered in houses, neighbourhoods, and across communities, posing a threat to civilians set on rebuilding their lives post-ISIL occupation.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) continues to clear these hazards with generous support from many governments. UNMAS thanks the Governments of the Czech Republic, Estonia and the Slovak Republic for their contributions to this life-saving work. These contributions make it possible for UNMAS to ensure that technical support, explosive ordnance risk education, and explosive hazard management advance in 2021/2022.

This contribution from the three generous donors will enable UNMAS to assist the Government of Iraq in achieving the vision of an Iraq free from explosive ordnance.

"Reconstruction, stability and security of Iraq remains one of the key priorities of the Czech Government in the entire Middle East region. We are therefore happy to contribute to achieving this ultimate goal through such concrete, visible and tangible activities as the UNMAS demining projects have proven to be", said Chargé d'Affaires a.i of the Czech Embassy in Baghdad.

"For Estonia, mine action is a priority area in our Government's Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Therefore, we are proud to continue with our contribution to UNMAS to support the Mine Action programmes in Iraq," stated a representative of the Government of Estonia.

Mr. Marian Majer, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic: *"Mines are a terrible legacy of war. People fall victim to them every day - often long after the actual fighting has ended. The affected countries need our support and that is why Slovakia financially supports the UNMAS's essential role in Iraq. Slovakia is committed to mine action in all its aspects and we commend UNMAS efforts that contributes to safe return of Iraqi people to their homes and to the socioeconomic reconstruction of communities."*

Commenting on the contribution, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, stated: *"The presence of explosive ordnance will continue to impede the safe and dignified return of displaced communities and the resumption of livelihoods until cleared. UNMAS is committed to facilitating a safe environment for Iraqis to live their lives unimpeded, and without fear."*

Contact:

Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief of Mine Action Programme, Baghdad, Iraq lodhammar@un.org