

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE GLOBAL ADVOCATE FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF MINES AND EXPLOSIVE HAZARDS**

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United Nations Foundation 2017 Global Leadership Dinner

New York, 18 October 2017

Good evening excellencies, ladies and gentleman,

What we're talking about tonight—the inability to move around one's own neighborhood, the fear that one misstep could mean losing a limb, or even a loss of life—it's not something most of us have ever dealt with. Thank goodness.

Unfortunately, with millions of land mines and explosive hazards littered around the world, in more than 60 countries, far too many people live with that exact anxiety every day.

But thanks to deminers like Betty in the film you just saw, every day that passes is a little bit safer than the day before.

Betty isn't someone we hear about on the news. Most of the world will never see her face, know her name, or understand fully the work she does. But it is safe to say, I think you can agree, that Betty is a fully fledged hero. As is Adeb, a Syrian landmine survivor who has made demining his life's mission. And Douglas, from Zimbabwe, who finds and destroys explosives in Mali and helps stop them from being smuggled and taking on new life as a car bomb or an IED.

Deminers are often the first aid workers, to arrive in areas of conflict. And because an essential part of the United Nations Mine Action Service work is also about helping landmine victims rehabilitate their bodies and rebuild their communities, they are often the last to leave. In fact, some never leave. In places like Cyprus, we're seeing 2nd generation deminers—young people who've learned this humanitarian work from their parents and who are using it to save a new generation of lives.

But it's so much more than saving lives. It is changing them entirely.

When someone is taught by UNMAS to really understand the dangers he or she faces, and how to go from being afraid of a mine to learning how to destroy it, they experience a completely different quality of life. Deminers don't just save others' lives. They empower people to save their own.

This means following through on what comes next. Not just making sure a person's future is possible, but that they can determine what that future holds.

And there is no one more dedicated to leading this charge—to making sure mines don't continue to haunt humanity the way they do today —than UNMAS director, Agnès Marcaillou.

UNMAS is 20 years old. And Agnès has helmed it fearlessly for nearly six of them.

Last year alone, Agnès lead UNMAS in educating over 4 million people, clearing more than 160 square kilometers of land and over 3,000 kilometers of roads, and destroying hundreds of thousands of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Under Agnès' guidance, the number of women working with UNMAS has doubled.

Mines are invisible to those in their path, but Agnès works tirelessly to remind the world that the threat mustn't be invisible to us.

Now, Agnès and UNMAS cannot achieve this on their own. They need your help.

It is challenging to ask for support for something so removed and intangible to our own lives; so please, let what you have learned tonight from Betty, from Agnès, and from UNMAS guide your decision to help this cause.

If I'm lucky enough to still be around in another 20 years, I would like to be standing here with you, celebrating the fact that through your generous support, UNMAS has managed to eradicate these cowardly weapons of war from the face of this earth. We can dream.

On behalf of myself and a grateful world, please join me in proudly honoring Agnès Marcaillou and humbly recognizing her incredible team from UNMAS.