



UNMAS

IN PEACE OPERATIONS 2019



Overview of UNMAS work
in United Nations peacekeeping and
special political missions in 2019.

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Cover: photo: UNMAS trains Cambodian EOD teams in Timbuktu to facilitate mobility
of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali. UNMAS/Imre Gelencser

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* Information provided in alphabetical order of mission acronym.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
A4P	Action for Peacekeeping
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
ERW	Explosive remnants of war
IED	Improvised explosive device
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMID	African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNMHA	United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office in Somalia

JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PEACE OPERATIONS AND THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is an integral component of nine peacekeeping operations and contributes significantly to the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative. In 2019, UNMAS helped to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers by clearing and verifying the safety of patrol routes in the Abyei area, Lebanon, South Sudan and Western Sahara, and by training peacekeepers – before and after deployment – to mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The number of peacekeeper fatalities from IED incidents in Mali has fallen from 24 in 2016 to 5 in 2019, thanks in large part to UNMAS efforts, while the framework for a whole-of-system approach to the urgent threat of IEDs has been finalized. UNMAS also contributed to the protection of civilians, ensuring that weapons and ammunition used by security services are safely managed and stored in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

UNMAS is active in special political missions, mapping explosive ordnance contamination in Libya, and helping to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and civilians in Somalia. In Somalia, UNMAS also provided technical and training to enhance the capacity of AMISOM troops to mitigate the threat posed by IEDs, while strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership.

Mine action is an essential enabler of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts. While located within the Department of Peace Operations, UNMAS has an explicit, system-wide mandate and serves as the coordinator for the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action and the Mine Action Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster. In that capacity, UNMAS led the update of the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, and ensured that Humanitarian Response Plans in 17 countries included mine action, thereby targeting 19 million people in need of protection from the impact of explosive ordnance in humanitarian crises.

In a number of non-mission settings, from Burkina Faso to Nigeria, Colombia to the State of Palestine, UNMAS guidance to national institutions and non-governmental organizations on weapons and ammunition management, IED threat mitigation, explosive ordnance risk education, assistance to victims and survivors of explosive incidents, and implementation of relevant disarmament and human rights treaties is helping to ensure the extension of State authority, build confidence in peace processes, and empower communities to retain mobility and pursue their livelihoods in spite of the threat posed by explosive ordnance.

Mine action creates the conditions needed for the work of peace operations to succeed. The role of UNMAS in this endeavour will be crucial for many years to come.



UN Photo

Rosemary A. DiCarlo,
Under-Secretary-General
for Political and Peacebuilding
Affairs



UN Photo

Jean-Pierre Lacroix,
Under-Secretary-General
for Peace Operations
Chair, United Nations Inter-Agency
Coordination Group on Mine Action

ACTION FOR PEACEKEEPING

In 2019, UNMAS contributed to the realization of the goals contained in the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative by helping to ensure that peace operations are fit for purpose so as to effectively implement their complex mandates in situations where there is an explosive threat.

UNMAS protected United Nations personnel and assets in 12 political and peacekeeping mission settings. For example, in the Abyei area and South Sudan, route clearance and verification facilitated mission mobility as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Through pre-deployment and in-mission training in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNMAS built the capacity of peace operations to mitigate the threat of IEDs, which led to a measurable improvement in the **safety and security of peacekeepers**. In MINUSMA, troops detected and neutralized more IEDs than ever before, with the rate of detection rising from 11 per cent in 2014 to nearly 50 per cent in 2019. This improved **performance** reduced IED fatalities among peacekeepers from 24 in 2016 to 5 in 2019, despite an increasing number of incidents, and reflects the increased ownership of troop-contributing countries in explosive threat mitigation.

In 2019, UNMAS worked alongside national authorities in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali to strengthen national capacities and ensure that weapons and ammunition are stored safely and securely. In several contexts, including in the Central African Republic, Cyprus and Darfur, weapons and ammunition management and mine action have contributed to **sustaining peace** and building confidence in the aftermath of conflict. In Yemen, UNMAS standby mine action expertise supported the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) in liaison with the parties to achieve progress on the mine action-related aspects of the Stockholm Agreement.

As an integral part of every peacekeeping operation with a **protection of civilians** mandate, UNMAS saved lives by mitigating context-specific explosive threats, ranging from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) to IEDs and unsecured weapons and ammunition. For instance, UNMAS supported UNMISS in weapons search operations, and destroyed confiscated weapons and ammunition in and around protection of civilian sites, to protect people from physical violence and contribute to a protective environment.

In line with the emphasis of A4P on improving peacekeeping **partnerships**, the work of UNMAS in Somalia has helped to deepen United Nations–African Union cooperation through the delivery of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and the provision of IED threat mitigation training, mentoring and specialized equipment to AMISOM forces.

Moreover, UNMAS contributed to the implementation of the **Women, Peace and Security** agenda by continuing to incorporate gender considerations in recruitment processes. Those efforts led to an increase, from 22 per cent in 2018 to 25 per cent in 2019, in the number of women working for UNMAS in peace operations, including in male-dominated technical areas. In Somalia, a focused outreach process led to the recruitment of women in a number of technical positions, including as trainers and mentors in EOD and improvised explosive device disposal.

UNMAS will continue to tangibly contribute to A4P in 2020.

UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA (MINURSO)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2494 (2019), UNMAS facilitated MINURSO efforts to monitor the ceasefire along the eastern side of the 1,465 km berm dividing Western Sahara. In 2019, UNMAS continued to enable safe passage for MINURSO military observers and civilian personnel by clearing minefields and cluster munition strike areas, as well as by verifying the safety of routes used by MINURSO. Crucial mine action information continued to be recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action and shared with MINURSO personnel and other local partners to enable a better understanding of the threat posed by mines and explosive remnants of war, thereby facilitating safer movement.

UNITED NATIONS MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTEGRATED STABILIZATION MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (MINUSCA)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2499 (2019), UNMAS – as a component of MINUSCA – contributed to the protection of civilians, as well as to the restoration and extension of State authority in the Central African Republic. In 2019, UNMAS continued to provide technical assistance to the National Commission for the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which resulted in the finalization and validation of a National Strategy for the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons as well as a budgeted National Action Plan. Those strategic documents will shape the Commission's priorities and activities in responding to prevailing needs until 2023.

As part of its efforts to assist in reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, UNMAS trained 101 members of the national defence and security forces in weapons and ammunition management, rehabilitated nine storage facilities for the Internal Security Forces and completed the deployment of two specialized weapons and ammunition storage kits for the Central African Armed Forces. Capacity-building in weapons and ammunition management contributed to the implementation of the National Defence Plan (2017) and the Global Plan for Resizing and Redeployment of the Internal Security Forces (2018), and played a role in the context of the arms embargo. In relation to the embargo, national capacity in weapons and ammunition management was a key factor in the assessment and review of the embargo measures set out in Security Council resolution 2488 (2019). Bolstered capacity to manage weapons and ammunition also increased the accountability of national defence and internal security forces, and strengthened their reputation among communities, in addition to improving compliance with international and national standards for weapons and ammunition management and helping to mitigate potential risks related to poor management.

UNITED NATIONS MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTEGRATED STABILIZATION MISSION IN MALI (MINUSMA)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2480 (2019), UNMAS enhanced the capacity of MINUSMA civilian and uniformed personnel, as well as national and local actors to mitigate the risks posed by explosive hazards, in particular IEDs. As explosive hazard threats expanded and intensified, particularly in central Mali, UNMAS continued to provide critical explosive threat mitigation support to enable freedom of movement for MINUSMA and to reduce peacekeeping casualties in a high-threat environment, in accordance with the new A4P initiative launched by the Secretary General in 2019, and the recommendations of the Santos Cruz Report (2017). Efforts continued to focus on enhancing the preparedness of the Mission's uniformed units through pre-deployment and in-mission training, and on building sustainability through Training of Trainers sessions and mentoring. Since 2013, UNMAS training and technical support has greatly contributed to making operations safer: MINUSMA troops are detecting and neutralizing more IEDs than ever before, from only 11 per cent of devices detected in 2014 to nearly 50 per cent in 2019, effectively reducing the risk and number of related fatalities, including the number of troops killed.

In 2019, UNMAS continued to build the capacity of national authorities to mitigate explosive threats, notably through training Malian military engineers in explosive search and detection activities. Malian instructors who had previously been trained through Training of Trainers programmes on IED threat awareness delivered over 50 training sessions to their own troops, demonstrating a steady increase in the national training capacity. UNMAS also contributed to the protection of civilians by supporting an increased number of training sessions to defence and security forces, and the provision of equipment to respond to the threat of IEDs across the country, especially in the central regions, which have been increasingly affected by those types of hazards.

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION STABILIZATION MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (MONUSCO)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2463 (2019), UNMAS carried out EOD that assisted MONUSCO in carrying out operations and protection civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By working to build weapons and ammunition management capacities among troop-contributing countries, as well as by carrying out awareness training on the threat posed by IEDs and explosive hazards to both uniformed and civilian personnel, UNMAS mitigated risks caused by improper or poor storage of contingents' weapons and ammunition, and contributed to the safety and security of the peacekeeping mission in the face of explosive hazard threats.

In 2019, UNMAS continued to focus on national capacity-building in close cooperation with the National Commission for Small Arms and Light Weapons Control and Reduction of Armed Violence. By conducting assessments of the Congolese National Police commissariats and sub-commissariats, installing weapon safes, carrying out weapons marking, and delivering training on weapons and ammunition management, UNMAS activities served to strengthen the capacities of national police and security forces to safely store and manage weapons and ammunition. UNMAS also destroyed surrendered weapons, in support of national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR IRAQ (UNAMI)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2470 (2019), UNMAS contributed to enabling the humanitarian and stabilization efforts of the United Nations and government actors in Iraq. Through explosive hazard detection and removal, UNMAS assisted in creating the conditions necessary for effective coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance to communities, and the safe, orderly and voluntary return or local integration, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including to areas previously occupied by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). UNMAS provided technical advice and practical support to national actors on the mitigation of explosive hazard threats, thereby building the capacity of the Government to provide essential civil and social services, and to coordinate critical reconstruction and assistance programmes.

AFRICAN UNION-UNITED NATIONS HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2495 (2019), UNMAS facilitated the implementation of the mandate of UNAMID, particularly with respect to the protection of civilians, through clearance and survey activities to mitigate the threat of ERW, and through the delivery of risk education to communities throughout Darfur. The ongoing de-escalation in violence increased UNMAS access to contaminated areas, with clearance activities enabling safe returns of previously displaced communities and an increase in socioeconomic activity. In 2019, UNMAS continued to be involved in preparations for the upcoming transition of UNAMID, including by verifying that sites to be handed over to the Government of Sudan were free of explosive ordnance and by ensuring that explosive hazard clearance is incorporated into the priorities of the United Nations country team, particularly with regard to humanitarian assistance and recovery operations.

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS (UNFICYP)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2483 (2019), UNMAS activities such as mine action planning and coordination, technical guidance and advice on explosive hazards, training on risk awareness to UNFICYP personnel, and advocacy and awareness raising helped to mitigate the threat posed by landmines and ERW to both peacekeepers and local communities, while contributing to the goal of a mine-free Cyprus. In 2019, UNMAS surveying activities allowed for the handover of 18 sites in both the north and the south that had been previously designated as suspected hazardous areas – a positive step that took place earlier than the anticipated 2020 deadline, and contributed to overarching confidence-building. UNMAS technical expertise continued to support reconciliation efforts, including by guaranteeing the safety of excavation work carried out by the Committee on Missing Persons and by providing technical guidance to inform UNFICYP dialogue facilitation efforts.

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (UNIFIL)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2433(2018), UNMAS delivered quality assurance monitoring training and validated UNIFIL Military Demining Units, which continued to ensure that the Mission conducts safe and efficient demining in compliance with both National Mine Action Standards and International Mine Action Standards. UNMAS delivered safety briefings on mitigating the threat posed by landmines and ERW to UNIFIL uniformed and civilian personnel and humanitarian actors in order to reduce the risk of explosive incidents. UNMAS also assisted the Lebanon Mine Action Centre to coordinate explosive ordnance risk education activities for UNIFIL and national and international civil society actors, promoting safe behaviour among local populations in areas of known or suspected presence of mines and other ERW.

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM SECURITY FORCE FOR ABYEI (UNISFA)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2497 (2019), UNMAS facilitated the activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism along the safe demilitarized border zone between Sudan and South Sudan. In 2019, UNMAS continued to identify and clear mines in the Abyei area and the safe demilitarized border zone, contributing to UNISFA force mobility and freedom of movement, and the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. UNMAS risk education and outreach activities facilitated safe voluntary returns and safe passage for local and transiting populations, including cattle herders. By destroying confiscated weapons and ammunitions and building the capacities of UNISFA in weapons and ammunition management, UNMAS contributed to the enforcement of a “weapons-free” Abyei and mitigated threats against civilians and mission personnel.

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN (UNMISS)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2459(2019), UNMAS survey and clearance activities mitigated the threat posed by explosive hazards, including landmines, cluster munitions, and ERW facing uniformed and civilian mission personnel, as well as communities across the country. Clearance continued in areas designated for returnee resettlement or construction of civilian facilities, such as schools, water points and markets. UNMAS also enabled the delivery of life-saving aid and humanitarian assistance through the clearance of roads, airstrips, food-drop zones and helicopter landing sites. UNMAS delivery of explosive ordnance risk education to communities served to raise awareness of the dangers posed by explosive hazards. By providing equipment, including explosive detection dog services, UNMAS also continued to secure UNMISS Juba premises and the aviation terminal by enhancing entry control and increasing security measures.

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT MISSION IN LIBYA (UNSMIL)

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2486 (2019), UNMAS technical guidance and expertise in weapons and ammunition management supported UNSMIL and Libyan authorities to stem weapons proliferation by securing uncontrolled arms and related materiel. UNMAS surveys, EOD and risk education also enhanced the safety of UNSMIL and humanitarian actors in carrying out their duties. In response to the outbreak of hostilities in and around Tripoli, UNMAS humanitarian mine action and coordination activities improved the safety of humanitarian operations and better protected civilians from explosive hazards. UNMAS also supported the Libyan Mine Action Centre in their coordination of humanitarian mine action organizations operating in Libya. UNMAS provided awareness training on IEDs and technical support to the United Nations Guard Unit in Tripoli on the safe and secure storage of ammunition, which, given the Unit's proximity to UNSMIL, was vital to the security of Mission personnel. UNMAS further provided case-by-case technical expertise, risk management guidance, and explosive hazard awareness training to UNSMIL staff and the wider humanitarian community in preparation for activities in newly accessible contaminated areas, which enabled more timely and safer assistance to affected communities.

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT OFFICE IN SOMALIA (UNSOS) AND UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN SOMALIA (UNSOM)

Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 2461 (2019) and 2498 (2019), UNMAS supported UNSOS and UNSOM by contributing to efforts to establish sustainable explosive threat mitigation capacity at Federal Government and Federal Member State levels in Somalia. UNMAS provided technical guidance and expertise to assist the development of national policies to strengthen mitigation efforts with respect to explosive threats and to enhance support to survivors. Training and guidance to national authorities, including the Somali Explosive Management Authority (SEMA) and Somali security forces, helped to build national capacities in the area of explosive threat mitigation and weapons and ammunition management.

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2472 (2019), UNMAS also provided explosive threat mitigation assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). By delivering training and providing specialized equipment, UNMAS assisted AMISOM to carry out operations and protect key infrastructure, despite the high threat of improvised explosive devices. In accordance with the Somali Transition Plan, UNMAS also contributed to the efforts of AMISOM to mentor, assist and train national security forces in joint operation settings.