Recent acts of violence by illegal armed groups are affecting the work of mine action organizations in Colombia. During May, two serious incidents occurred in the departments of Meta and Antioquia.

The first event occurred on Friday, May 6, when armed actors incinerated two vehicles belonging to the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines (CCCM, in Spanish) in the municipality of Urrao, as part of the "armed strike" promoted by the so-called "Clan del Golfo". Fortunately, the CCCM personnel were unharmed.

The second event occurred on Tuesday, May 17, when a team of at least 12 members of the Colombian Army's Humanitarian Demining Engineer Battalion No. 4 were wounded after a terrorist attack with explosive devices in the municipality of Vistahermosa, Meta, while the personnel were on their way to carry out demining work. Six of the soldiers were seriously injured. Due to their humanitarian work, the soldiers of this battalion do not carry weapons for the development of their activities in rural areas.

Due to the deterioration of security conditions in Meta, the total suspension of humanitarian demining operations in the department was announced. Last December, the civilian organizations The HALO Trust and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) had already decided to suspend their work in this department after security incidents in which two vehicles of these organizations were incinerated.

In view of this challenging scenario and with the aim of reducing this type of incidents, the directors of civilian demining organizations operating in Colombia and UNMAS requested the OACP to speed up processes to micro-locate territories in municipalities where security conditions allow to continue deploying operations, and to promote a communications campaign to raise awareness about the humanitarian approach to demining.

UNMAS condemns these actions that limit the work of humanitarian organizations, threaten the integrity of the personnel and ultimately harm the rural communities that yearn to see their territories free of mines. UNMAS reiterates the call made from the United Nations to armed groups: humanitarian organizations #NotATarget.

*Sources: CCCM and Colombian Army reports after the incidents.*
On May 25, the UNMAS Regional Coordination (RC) team presented the CCCM as the organization that will initiate humanitarian demining operations in Puerto Libertador, the second municipality in Cordoba with the highest number of recorded Anti-personnel Mines victims (132) since 1990, according to OACP data. The presentation was attended by municipal authorities, community and indigenous leaders, who have been waiting for years for these operations to begin. During the meeting, 51 communities were micro-located where the operations will be deployed. The RC team facilitates the inter-institutional articulation that allows the start of humanitarian demining tasks in the territories.

Last February HUMANICEMOS DH, an organization made up of ex-combatants peace signatories, handed over three new mine-free areas, benefiting the population living in the communities of Unión Cordillera and El Porvenir in the municipality of La Montañita, Caquetá. The three areas correspond to a total of 2,443 square meters, land that had been abandoned since 2012 due to the suspicion of contamination with explosive devices. The population stated that in previous years, these areas were used by armed groups to set up camps, plant crops for illicit use and also witnessed fighting. The beneficiary communities also received Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sessions given by ex-combatants in the process of reintegration. The official handover of these areas to the community took place after certification by the OACP.

On May 25, the UNMAS Regional Coordination (RC) team presented the CCCM as the organization that will initiate humanitarian demining operations in Puerto Libertador, the second municipality in Cordoba with the highest number of recorded Anti-personnel Mines victims (132) since 1990, according to OACP data. The presentation was attended by municipal authorities, community and indigenous leaders, who have been waiting for years for these operations to begin. During the meeting, 51 communities were micro-located where the operations will be deployed. The RC team facilitates the inter-institutional articulation that allows the start of humanitarian demining tasks in the territories.

Through the Regional Coordination Team in Antioquia, UNMAS provided financial support to facilitate the logistics for the delivery of humanitarian aid to indigenous communities victims of the armed conflict and anti-personnel mines in the municipalities of Caucasia, Murindó and Arboletes. This inter-agency mission, carried out in early April, was organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia (OIA) and cooperation agencies from the Basque Country. Thanks to this joint effort, some 1,000 humanitarian aid kits were delivered during the mission.
This is how the Mine Action Day was conmemorated in the regions

On April 4, International Mine Awareness Day was commemorated. In Colombia, mine action organizations, national and local authorities organized multiple activities focused on recognizing the resilience of victims of Anti-personnel Mines (APM) and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Through the Regional Coordinators deployed in the departments most affected by the presence of explosive devices, UNMAS accompanied the following public activities articulated by the OACP and the Victims Unit (UARIV, in Spanish):

**Antioquia**

In Medellín, an EORE workshop was held in alliance with the Corporación Paz y Democracia, aimed at victims of APM/UXO, in which some 35 people participated. In addition, the Mayor's Office of Medellín held a public event in which the victims witnessed didactic activities on mine risk prevention.

**Córdoba**

In Montería, a psychosocial support workshop was held with survivors of APM/UXO accidents, in which playful activities were developed in which the victims addressed their healing, adaptation and resilience processes after their accidents.

**Arauca**

In Arauca, an EORE session was organized by the Lutheran Foundation, in which survivors of landmine accidents told their life stories. The event, in which the Governor's Office of Arauca, the Arauca Municipal Mayor's Office, associations of mine victims and other allies participated, closed with a symbolic act of planting trees in the municipality's central park.

**Nariño**

In the house of the Guachavés Indigenous Council, located in the municipality of Santacruz, a meeting was held focused on the survivors and families of people who died in accidents with APM/UXO, who shared their testimonies and their processes of forgiveness after the victimizing events. Santacruz is one of the municipalities most affected by explosive devices, and about 70% of its inhabitants belong to indigenous communities.

**Cauca**

An EORE activity was held in Popayán, which included a walk, a symbolic tree planting ceremony and sports activities, with the participation of mine accident survivors. The activities were carried out in alliance with victims’ associations, the Governor’s Office of Cauca, the Mayor’s Office of Popayán, the National Army and National Police.

**Putumayo**

In Mocoa, accompaniment was provided to the Governor’s Office of Putumayo and the Army’s Humanitarian Demining Brigade in a EORE session for victims of APM/UXO in the department.

This project has the financial support of:
The UNMAS Colombia team

Miguel Herrera
Monitoring and Quality Management Assistant

Miguel is a professional in International Business and a Quality Management Systems auditor. He worked in the Victims Reparation Directorate of the Presidency of Colombia and has eight years of work experience with organizations in the mine action sector. He collaborated with The HALO Trust, with the OAS Mission in Colombia for mine action, and with Humanity & Inclusion in Quality Management of humanitarian demining operations. In July 2019 he joined the team of the Quality Management Body of UNMAS Colombia, which is responsible for verifying that the humanitarian demining processes and operations carried out by HUMANICEMOS DH personnel in Caquetá comply with the International Standards and Colombian Technical Norms governing the sector. Miguel has received multiple training in Explosive Ordnance Disposal, land release, handling and storage of explosives, with which he has strengthened the area of operations and technical assistance of UNMAS.

About UNMAS Colombia

Since 2010, UNMAS has supported Colombia’s national mine action authority, now under the leadership of the OACP, and mine action organizations to increase the sector’s capacity, develop and strengthen their coordination and regulatory frameworks. UNMAS works in Colombia with the support of the European Union, through the European Trust Fund for Peace; and the Governments of Denmark, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland, to whom we are grateful for their contributions in 2022.