

# Mine Action

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## Action Plan 2023–2026



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Federal Department of Defence,  
Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Foreign Policy Strategy  
2020–2023



Arms Control and  
Disarmament Strategy  
2022–2025



**Mine Action  
Action Plan  
2023–2026**

This Action Plan serves to implement the [Arms Control and Disarmament Strategy 2022–2025](#) with regard to Mine Action. It sets out the fields of action, objectives and measures to be put into place by 2026. The Action Plan was adopted by the FDFA and the DDPS and is situated at the third level of the [cascade of key foreign policy documents](#). A glossary of key terms is also included in the document.

# Foreword



*Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis  
Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs*



*Federal Councillor Viola Amherd  
Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport*

With Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, the large-scale use of mines and cluster munitions has returned to Europe. The consequences for the civilian population are devastating once again. But Ukraine is only the latest of still too many examples: People in dozens of states still suffer from the threat of mines and other explosive ordnance.

It is true that humanitarian mine action can look back on great successes. Since the end of the Cold War, more than 30 countries have been completely cleared of mines, and in 10 countries all remnants of cluster munitions have been removed. Affected communities are now better informed about the dangers, and survivors of accidents are better cared for.

But major challenges remain. In addition to the legacy of past wars, new armed conflicts bring new contamination from mines and other explosive ordnance. The consequences of combat operations in densely populated areas and the use of improvised explosive devices are particularly serious. After a welcome decline in the number of casualties in the past, a marked increase has been recorded again in recent years.

Switzerland has been involved in mine action for over 30 years. It deploys specialised military personnel to support UN missions and promotes projects in the affected countries. It also works at the diplomatic, legal and practical levels to ensure that the relevant conventions are universally implemented. With the establishment of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) in 1998, Switzerland has ensured that today there is a globally recognised centre of

expertise on which international organisations, states, and non-state and private actors can draw. Cooperation with the GICHD will continue to be an important aspect of Swiss efforts against mines and other explosive ordnance over the next four years.

Humanitarian mine action is in line with Switzerland's humanitarian tradition. It is first and foremost about reducing suffering and enabling sustainable development. At the same time our country is strengthening international arms control and disarmament, which is under particular strain in the current context of geopolitical tensions.

With the present action plan, the FDFA and the DDPS are jointly implementing the objectives of the Federal Council's Arms Control and Disarmament Strategy 2022–2025. On the one hand, what has already been achieved is to be consolidated and what has proved its worth is to be continued. On the other hand, Switzerland also wants to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological innovation and break new ground. We would like to thank all the federal agencies involved for their valuable contributions.

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Cassis' and the second is 'Amherd'.

*Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis      Federal Councillor Viola Amherd*

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# 1 Introduction

Every day, mines and other explosive ordnance kill and injure dozens of people. Casualty rates have risen again in recent years, demonstrating the continued need for humanitarian mine action.

The survivors of mine accidents usually suffer permanent disabilities with serious social, psychological and economic consequences for them and their families.

Finally, it should be noted that the end of an armed conflict does not bring immediate relief to the affected population: mines and other unexploded ordnance remain active even after the conflict has ended.

For these reasons, Switzerland considers it its humanitarian duty to support the affected people in dealing with these threats.

Not only individuals, but also societies are affected by mines and other explosive ordnance. The danger remains, making entire areas no longer useable for many years or decades. As a result, displaced persons are unable to return to their homes. The cultivation of fields, the reconstruction of destroyed buildings and infrastructure and thus social and economic development are prevented. The affected population often lives in fear. Humanitarian actors and peacekeepers are also at risk. A return to normality is made impossible.

Mine action contributes to alleviating the social, economic and environmental impacts of mines and other explosive ordnance. On the one hand, it is directly concerned with preventing acci-

## Terminology

In this Action Plan, the terms ‘mines and other explosive ordnance’ are used to comprehensively describe the various sources of risk. These may be anti-personnel or anti-vehicle mines, including of improvised nature, cluster munitions or other explosive remnants of war. The term ‘mine action’ explicitly includes the humanitarian clearance of explosive remnants of war.

dents and new suffering. On the other hand, it aims to enable the sustainable development of the affected communities. For this reason, in addition to the actual clearance work, it also includes Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE), victim assistance, the advocacy for the ban of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, and the destruction of stockpiles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In contrast, military mine and explosive ordnance clearance primarily serves the protection of a country's own troops or the fulfilment of tasks or mandates and can, under certain circumstances, be seen as an act of combat. A long-term solution to the mine problem is not being pursued. Thematically related areas, such as small arms and light weapons and the safe and secure storage and management of conventional ammunition throughout its life cycle, do not fall under the term mine action. However, there are synergies with these thematic areas that should and can be used – where appropriate and useful – in the context of mine action.



Figure 1: The five pillars of humanitarian mine action.

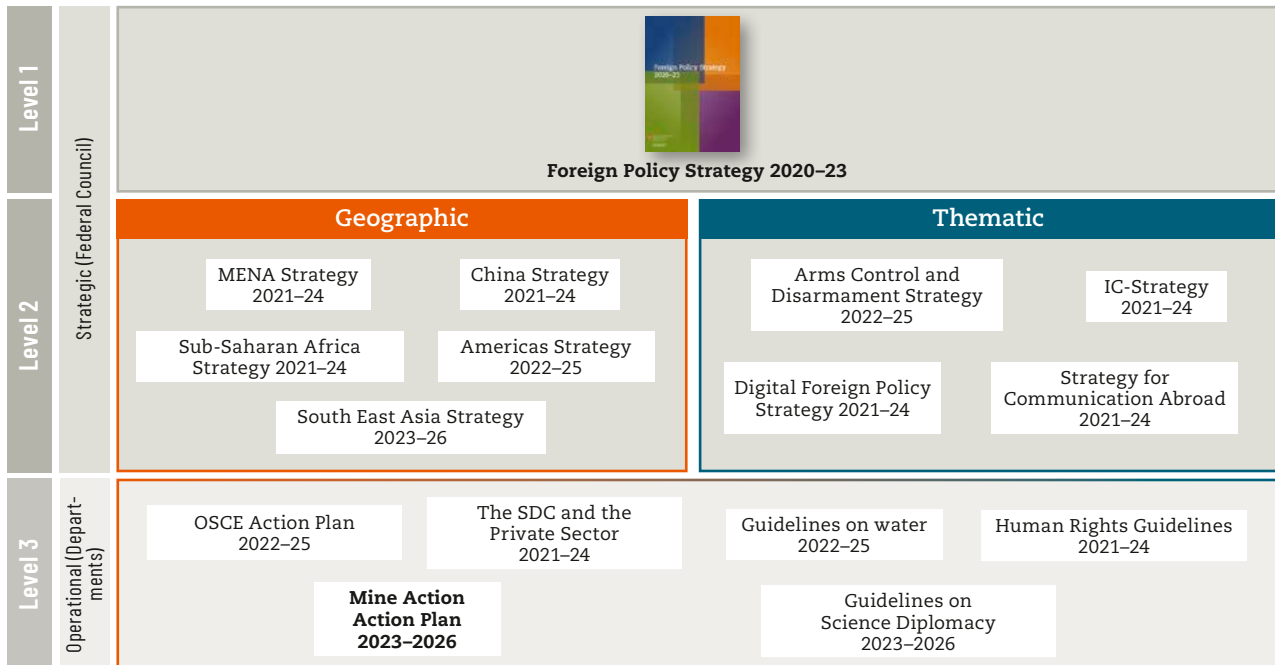


Figure 2: Foreign policy strategy cascade (source FDFA – illustrative selection of documents).

Switzerland has been active in mine action for over 30 years. In its [Arms Control and Disarmament Strategy 2022-2025](#) (ADN strategy), it has committed itself to continuing to contribute to reducing the negative effects of conventional weapons. The present Action Plan specifically implements measure D1 of the ADN strategy and foresees actions in three fields: Firstly, Switzerland promotes the normative framework. Secondly, it supports affected states through mine action on the ground. Thirdly, Switzerland takes advantage of opportunities for innovative approaches to further advance the field. Within the framework of the foreign policy strategy cascade, this Action Plan replaces the [Mine Action Strategy 2016-2022](#) of the FDFA and the DDPS.

Within the framework of the core foreign policy documents, there are connections to the [International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24](#), the [Dispatch on Measures to Strengthen Switzerland's Role as a Host State 2020-2023](#), and the [Dispatch on a Framework Credit for the Continuation of Support to the three Geneva Centres 2020-2023](#). In addition, the [Federal Council Security Policy Report](#) of 24 November 2021 underscores that the universalisation and implementation of the bans on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions as a measure in the area of arms control and disarmament contribute to the stability and predictability of the security policy environment. Furthermore, the [supplemental report](#) dated 7 September 2022 mentions partnership activities in the field of mine action.

# 2 Background

## 2.1 How did we get here?

With the end of the Cold War, consensus grew at the international level to limit or prevent the humanitarian impact of mines and other ordnance. More and more states and actors agreed to create a comprehensive solution that would not only restrict the use of these weapons, but also promote the clearance of contaminated areas and the assistance of victims.

In the 1990s and 2000s, various international legal instruments were negotiated that brought solutions to partial areas. In 1996, the revised Protocol on Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices was adopted under the **UN Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW)**.<sup>2</sup> This introduced significant new restrictions on landmines and was also binding on major powers such as China, Russia and the US. However, neither a general ban on anti-personnel mines nor a comprehensive approach to the mine problem were achieved.

Therefore, particularly interested states and civil society actors began to look for solutions outside the traditional disarmament forums. An initial success was achieved in 1999 with the entry into force of the **Mine Ban Treaty**<sup>3</sup> also known as the Ottawa Convention or the APMBC). In its scope, the convention is limited to the category of anti-personnel mines, which are particularly perfidious. Anti-vehicle mines, on the other hand, are not covered by it. The Convention was ground-breaking: for the first time, a weapon was not only comprehensively banned (use, stockpiling, production, transfer), but the obligation of all States Parties to assist each other, e.g. in clearance of mines, was also enshrined. Assistance for victims was stipulated too. China, Russia and the US, along with some other states, have to date not joined the Convention.

In 2003, the **Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War** was adopted within the framework of the UN Convention on Conventional Weapons.<sup>4</sup> This protocol addresses the fact that explosive remnants of war, such as unexploded ordnance and abandoned ordnance, also pose a considerable threat to the civilian population. They cause serious humanitarian problems even after armed conflicts and can often hamper reconstruction.

As the Mine Ban Treaty quickly achieved the desired effect, a similar approach was taken with regard to cluster munitions. In 2008 followed the **Convention on Cluster Munitions**<sup>5</sup> (also known as the Oslo Convention or the CCM), which prohibits the use as well as the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. The Convention also enshrined measures to assist victims. Today it forms the basis for international cooperation in the fight against cluster munitions, including the clearance of remnants.

These international developments have shown **considerable success**: the Mine Ban Treaty currently has 164 States Parties, making it one of the most successful agreements in the field of disarmament. The Convention on Cluster Munitions has been ratified by 110 states. The international community of states and civil society began to implement these treaties in a targeted manner, at great expense. Since 1999, more than USD 10 billion have been spent on mine action in over 60 states. A total of 33 states and territories have already been completely cleared of mines and 10 of cluster munitions. The number of casualties has fallen sharply. Stockpiles of more than 55 million mines and 1.5 million cluster munitions have been destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of comprehensive **technical standardisation** also played a major role in these successes. The [International Mine Action Standards](#) (IMAS) created a common understanding and a common language at the technical level. The introduction of the *land release* methodology achieved a significant increase in efficiency. The combination of survey and clearance enables the rapid release of uncontaminated suspected areas and the targeted use of expensive clearance resources, making the process much more efficient and effective. Overall, an efficient sector has developed in which international organisations, states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private sector actors work together.

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2 [Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#), concluded in Geneva on 10 October 1980.

3 [Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction](#), concluded in Oslo on 18 September 1997.

4 [Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects \(Protocol V\)](#), concluded in Geneva on 28 November 2003.

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5 [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#), concluded in Dublin on 30 May 2008.

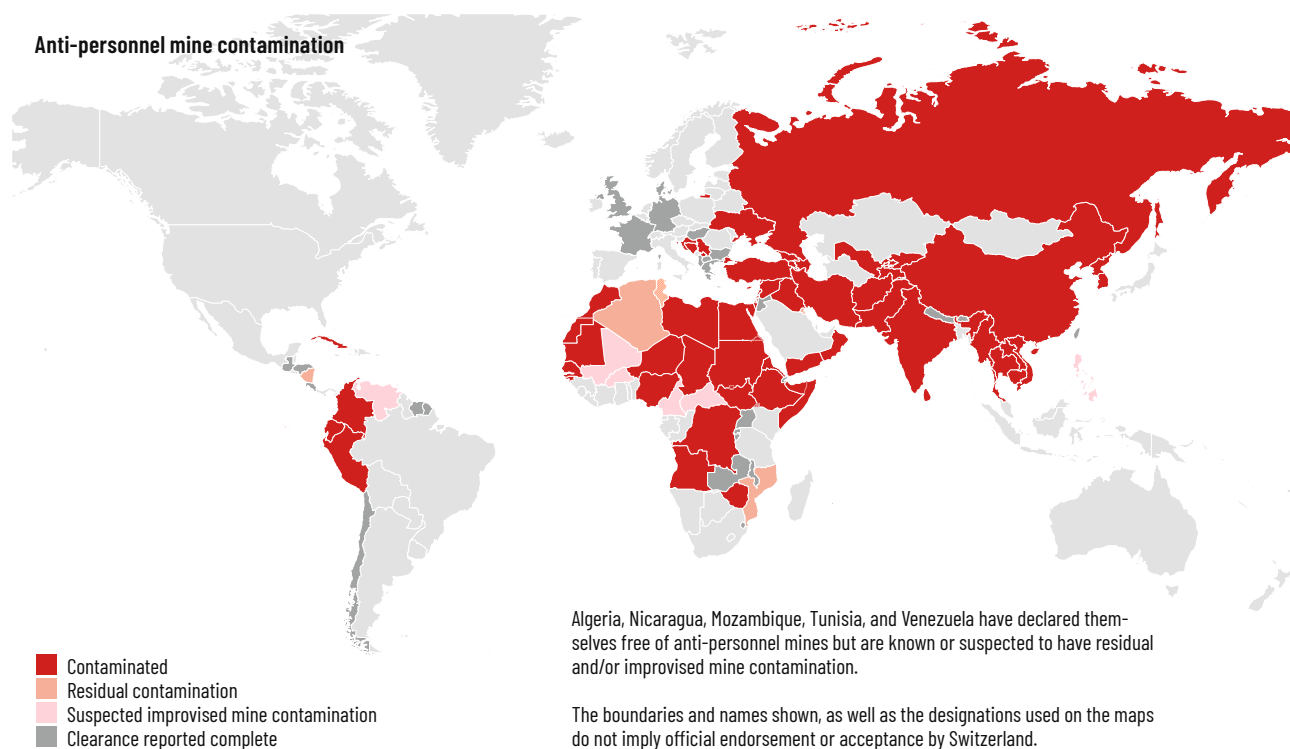
6 Sources: [Cluster Munition Monitor 2022](#) and [Landmine Monitor 2022](#).

## 2.2 Trends

Despite these major successes, significant **challenges** persist. Currently, at least 60 states and regions have mined areas and 29 remain contaminated with cluster munitions. As such, even decades after the end of conflicts, there are still large areas of land that the population uses only at great risk if at all. This hinders development. A significant number of countries are not on track towards meeting their clearance deadlines, despite several extensions. The reasons for this are manifold and vary depending on the context. They can include challenging topography, insufficient data, funding gaps, lack of political will, or previously unknown or even new contamination. Furthermore, the universalisation of the relevant conventions has been slowing down. In recent years, only a few new States Parties have joined.

In addition, the 2010s saw a resurgence in the use of mines and other explosive ordnance, including cluster munitions, in newly flared-up conflicts. This led to **new contamination** in the Middle East, the Sahel, Ukraine and the Horn of Africa. Many of these armed conflicts are characterised in particular by the use of *improvised explosive devices* (IEDs). IEDs can be produced cheaply anywhere and cause humanitarian problems comparable to those brought about by conventionally produced mines.

The consequences are considerable: the **number of casualties** has been rising sharply again **since 2014**. All the more so as urban areas are increasingly contaminated with mines and explosive ordnance. In addition, there is the use of IEDs, which are mostly used by non-state armed groups. Victim-activated IEDs often fall under the definition of the Mine Ban Treaty. In recent



### Status of the Mine Ban Treaty by world region

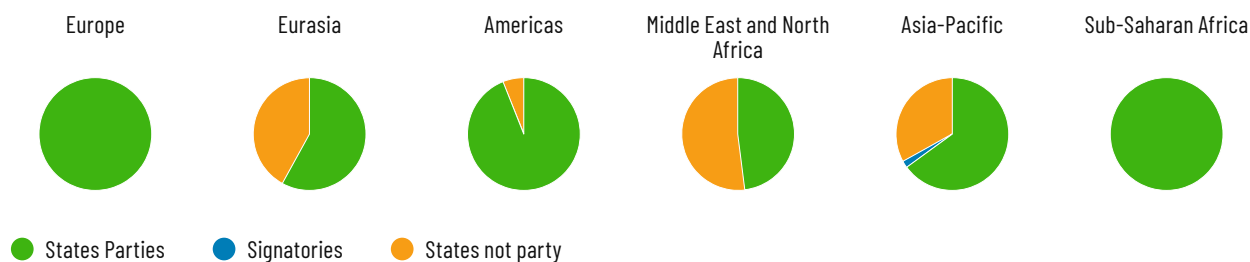


Figure 3: Anti-personnel mine contamination and status of the Mine Ban Treaty 2021 (Sources: ICBL-CMC, Landmine Monitor 2022, ISU APMBC).



### Number of casualties

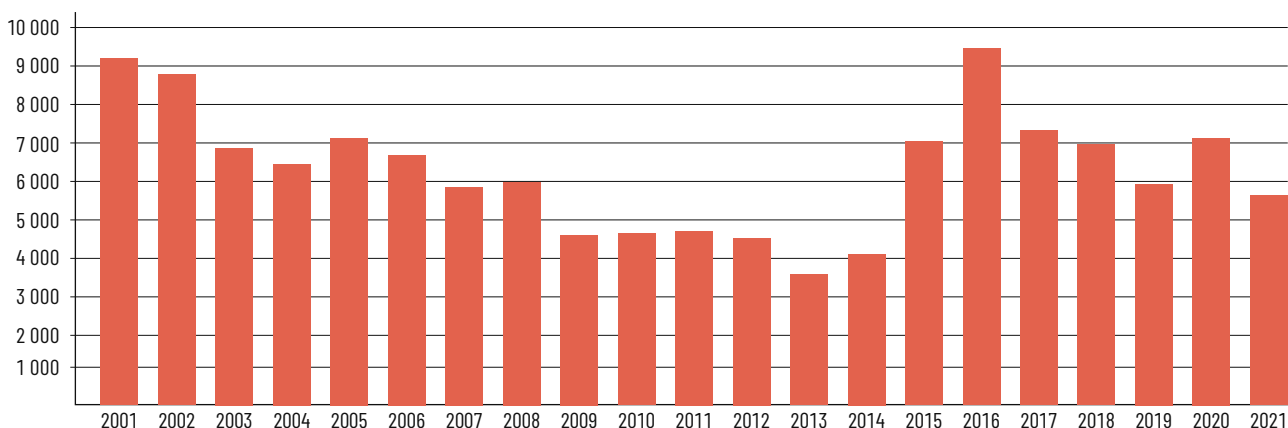


Figure 4: Casualties from mines and other explosive ordnance 2001–2021 (Source: ICBL-CMC, *Landmine Monitor* 2022).

years, these IEDs have claimed more victims than conventionally produced mines. They are therefore mainly responsible for the increase in casualties. In densely populated areas, mines and other explosive ordnance often cause particularly severe direct and indirect damage to the civilian population and to civilian infrastructure.

Contamination in densely populated areas and the use of IEDs pose several key problems for **clearance teams**: To begin with, urban areas in themselves represent a particularly difficult and complex operational environment. Moreover, important clearance methods used so far (e.g. metal detectors) can no longer be used, as metal objects such as rebar or everyday objects are omnipresent, especially in rubble and debris. Furthermore, the improvised manufacturing method makes the clearance of IEDs more challenging and dangerous; for one thing, no blueprints are available. Clearance therefore requires specialised knowledge and the development of adapted standards and procedures.

In many cases, clearance work is further complicated because armed conflicts have not ended or keep flaring up. In such contexts, the ongoing **explosive ordnance risk education** of the population is particularly central – including the timely inclusion of returning refugees and internally displaced persons. These activities aim to reduce the risk of injury from mines and other explosive ordnance by raising awareness among the affected population and promoting behavioural change.

**Victim assistance** is an integral part of mine action. Victims often require lifelong support, making it impossible to set a specific deadline for achieving the goal. In addition, according to the principle of non-discrimination, access to services must be determined on the basis of the actual need, not the cause of the disability. Hence, treating mine victims differently compared to other persons with disabilities cannot be justified. Victim assistance therefore always represents a comprehen-

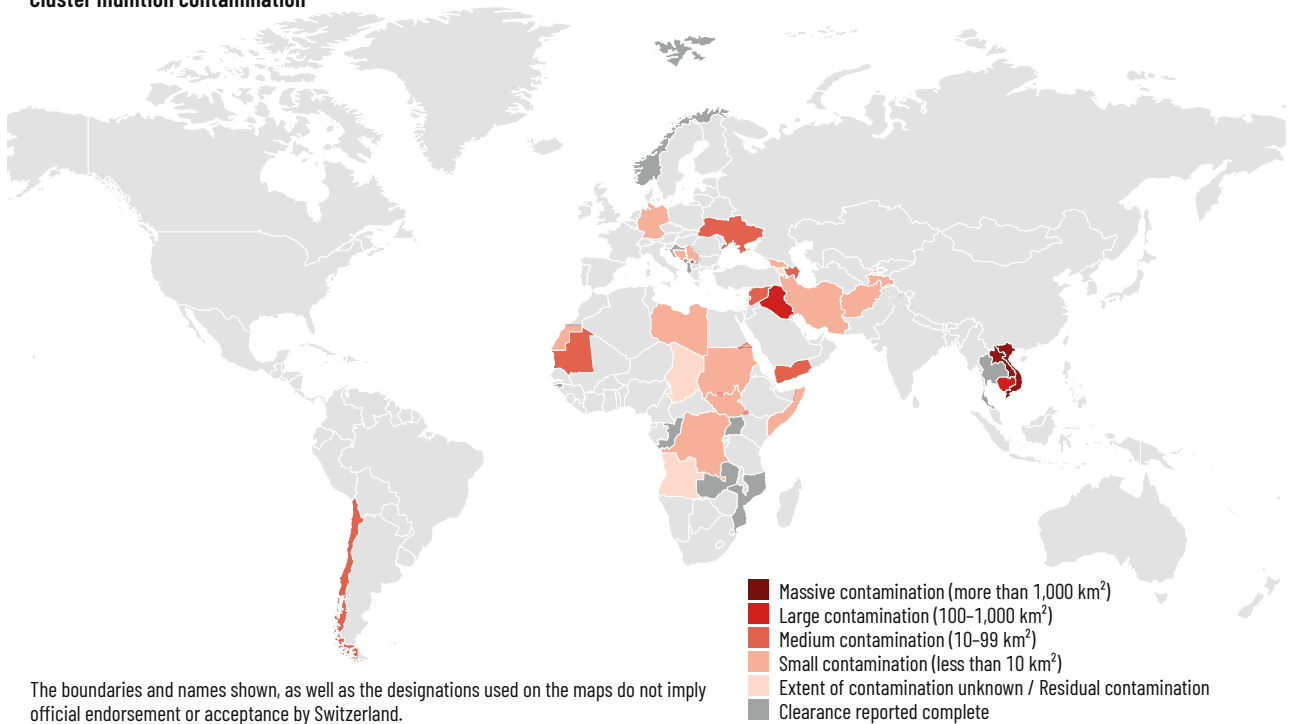
sive task that reaches far beyond the healthcare systems of the affected states – into national disability, development and human rights frameworks and mechanisms. In this context, the rights guaranteed by the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>7</sup> are also relevant.

One success is the fact that many of the affected states have managed to build up their own **survey and clearance capacities** that work safely, efficiently and according to the same international norms and standards. This has significantly reduced the dependence on the international community for personnel. However, securing funding for these domestic capacities remains a major challenge. All the more so because even after the work is completed, a minimum clearing capacity must be maintained in the long term. Mines and unexploded ordnance from the two World Wars are still being found in Europe today. Such residual contamination will also be discovered in today's contaminated states long after the clearance has been completed.

Thanks to technological advances, clearance work is now increasingly relying on **innovative approaches**. This is especially true against the background of increased contamination in urban areas. Especially in the area of detection, the combination of various sensors on unmanned platforms (drones, vehicles) as well as the application of artificial intelligence leads one to expect an accelerated detection and analysis of contaminated areas. Other innovations promise more efficient risk education, for example via smartphone applications. The multitude of initiatives by academic research institutions, industry and mine action organisations is remarkable. However, these activities are often insufficiently coordinated, in particular with experienced users in the field.

<sup>7</sup> [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) , concluded in New York on 13 December 2006.

### Cluster munition contamination



### Status of the Convention on Cluster Munitions by world region

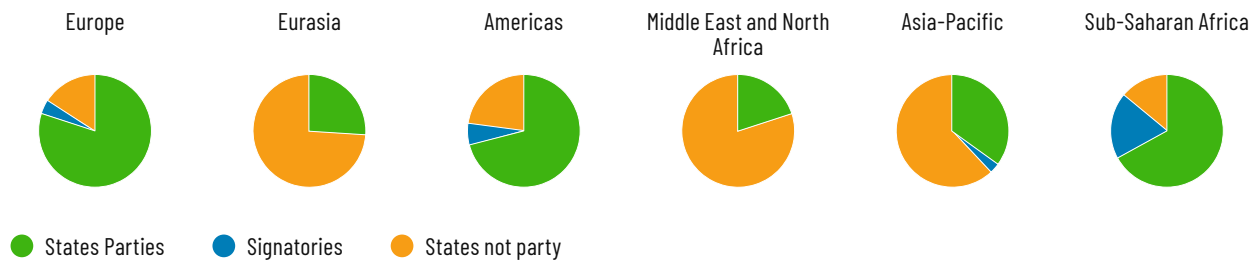


Figure 5: Cluster munition contamination and status of the Convention on Cluster Munitions 2021 (Sources: ICBL-CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2022, ISU CCM).

The combination of historical legacy contamination and new, sometimes complex contamination in current armed conflicts poses major challenges for mine action. The optimism fuelled by the initial success of the conventions has given way to a certain disillusionment in recent years. These developments are a reflection of the changes in world politics marked by growing geopolitical tensions. Especially in view of the recent increase in casualties, continued efforts are needed to reduce these risks and to strengthen the protection of civilians from the dangers of mines and other explosive ordnance.

## 2.3 Switzerland's role and principles

Switzerland has been supporting mine action for more than 30 years. It does this with a complementary approach that combines diplomatic support with operational work on the ground. On the one hand, it supports existing multilateral processes and institutions as well as the implementation of instruments under international law. For example, in 2019–2021 Switzerland chaired the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and led the drafting of the [Lausanne Action Plan](#) for the period 2021–2026. On the other hand, it helps affected states through project work and the deployment of specialists in the affected areas.

In the **2016–2022 Mine Action Strategy** of the FDFA and DDPS, Switzerland set itself three goals: 1) advocating the full implementation and universal application of existing international agreements, 2) supporting the affected states in clearing mined areas, preventing accidents and helping victims, and 3) promoting the development of national capacities in the field of mine action in accordance with the principle of 'helping people to help themselves'. In total, Switzerland spent around CHF 17 million each year on mine action.



Ambassador Félix Baumann (right) hands over the presidency to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Aidan Liddle, after the successful conclusion of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (© ISU CCM).

The **external evaluation** of this strategy attests to the effectiveness and success of Switzerland's contribution to global efforts, as well as to the relevance of its target- and priority-setting. This encourages Switzerland to continue the current approach and to adapt it in a targeted manner to the new challenges described above. In addition, internal synergies are to be used even more efficiently and gender-specific aspects are to be given greater consideration.

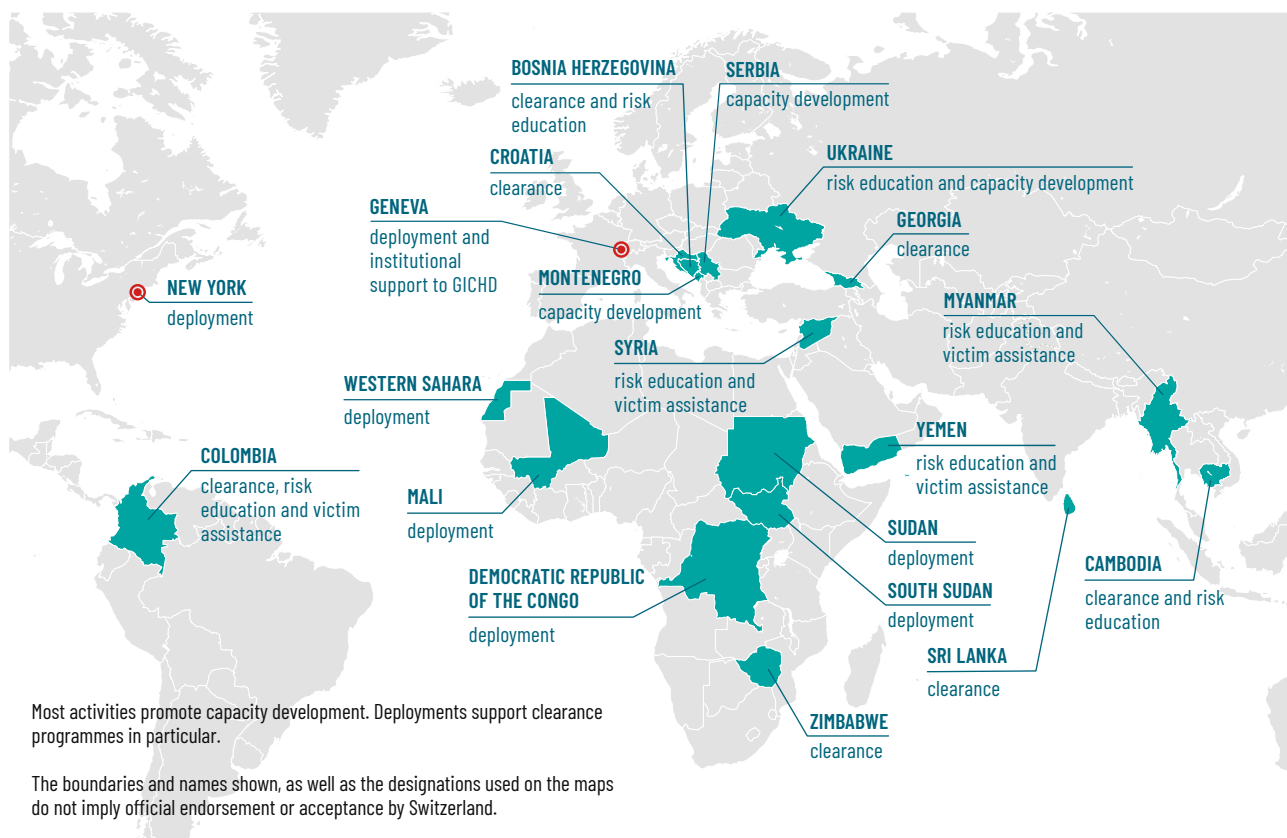


Figure 6: Switzerland's commitment to mine action in 2022 (Source: Natural Earth Data, UN, FDFA, DDPS).

Some of the most important actors and instruments in the field of mine action come together in **International Geneva**. For example, the implementation of the conventions on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions is coordinated by States Parties in Geneva, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a large number of relevant NGOs are based there. The Geneva ecosystem, which also includes actors from the fields of disarmament, humanitarian aid and development, helps to address the challenges in the field of mine action and enables Switzerland to exploit synergies between these different actors. By founding the [Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining \(GICHD\)](#) in 1998 and promoting it since then, Switzerland has made a conscious contribution to this centre of excellence that is now recognised worldwide. Switzerland supports the GICHD on the basis of the dispatch on the framework credit for the continuation of support for the three Geneva Centres and continues the strategic partnership. It uses the Centre's expertise to anticipate trends, develop solutions, disseminate proven approaches, promote the exchange of experience and develop capacities. Furthermore, the GICHD also houses the *Implementation Support Units* of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Based on its profile and complementary to the principles of its ADN policy, Switzerland is guided by the following [principles](#) in humanitarian mine action:

- The humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and **neutrality** are central to mine action.
- Switzerland actively uses the synergies offered by the interaction between peacebuilding, humanitarian aid and development cooperation (the so-called **triple nexus**).
- Implementation of the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development, which is based on the principle of 'Leave no one behind'.
- Consideration of **gender aspects** and equal participation of all population groups in mine action, in line with the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
- Avoidance of unintended negative consequences ('Do no harm'). Activities are carried out at the invitation of national and local authorities.



UNMAS-provided risk education in a school in Maviivi, Beni district, Democratic Republic of the Congo (© MONUSCO/Michael Ali).

# 3 Fields of action

Switzerland shares the vision of the relevant conventions to end the suffering and casualties caused by mines and other explosive ordnance. It sets itself the following overarching goal within the framework of this Action Plan:

**Switzerland's long-term goal is a world in which people can live without the risks of mines and other explosive ordnance, thus enabling sustainable economic and social development.**

Based on the context analysis, Switzerland operationalises this goal with the following three fields of action:

## **Field of action 1: PROMOTION OF THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Switzerland aims to ensure that states comply with and implement their obligations under international law from the relevant agreements and international humanitarian law. It also aims to ensure that as many actors as possible take on these obligations. This explicitly includes non-state armed groups,

not least in view of the high number of casualties caused by improvised explosive devices, which are mostly used by these actors. The central role of International Geneva in humanitarian disarmament should be further strengthened.

## **Field of action 2: HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION ON THE GROUND**

Switzerland directly engages in the affected states and territories. In doing so, it focuses on the clearance of mines and other explosive ordnance, on explosive ordnance risk education and on assistance for victims. Through projects and deployments,

it increases the safety of the people affected and enables sustainable development. In accordance with the principle of helping people to help themselves, it supports in particular the development of sustainable national capacities.

## **Field of action 3: INNOVATION**

Switzerland seizes the opportunities offered by innovative approaches. It promotes the consistent application of the International Mine Action Standards and their further development in the face of particular challenges such as contamination in

urban areas or IEDs. It also promotes the useful application of new technologies that make humanitarian mine action more effective and efficient.

## 3.1 Promotion of the normative framework

### OBJECTIVE 1:

#### COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RELEVANT AGREEMENTS

Effective implementation of the normative framework is central to making the vision of a world free of mines and explosive ordnance a reality. In an environment where international norms are under pressure, unconditional commitment to compliance with basic prohibitions and regulations becomes more important. Alleged violations, particularly regarding the prohibited use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, must also be clarified.

Furthermore, the consideration of deadlines is also part of the effective implementation of the agreements. When necessary and provided for in the agreements, deadline extensions can be requested. However, such requests must be done in a timely manner and well justified. Increased transparency is

desirable overall to show the progress and challenges of States Parties in implementation.

International Geneva is already a leading hub for mine action. The key stakeholders bring their expertise to bear in areas including in the elaboration of the IMAS and the work of the conventions. The advantages of this hub and the resulting synergies are to be used consistently.

#### Measures

1. a	In the bilateral and multilateral framework, Switzerland demands compliance with the legal framework and its norms and works to clarify alleged violations.
1. b	Within the conventions and in bilateral exchanges, Switzerland works to ensure that the States Parties fulfil their obligations within the specified deadlines and promotes the effective implementation of the Oslo and Lausanne Action Plans and their monitoring.
1. c	Switzerland advocates a high level of transparency in the implementation of the relevant agreements and is committed to ensuring that as many States Parties as possible comply with their reporting obligations.
1. d	Switzerland strengthens International Geneva as a hub for disarmament and specifically for humanitarian demining, in order to promote the normative framework and to foster exchanges and synergies among the actors present there.

## OBJECTIVE 2:

### CONTINUED UNIVERSALISATION OF THE RELEVANT AGREEMENTS

The existing normative framework in the field of mine action can still be judged as robust. In particular, the conventions on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions are comprehensive instruments whose implementation promises to end the suffering and death caused by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions once and for all. The relevant protocols of the CCW also contribute to preventing casualties.

In this context, it is important to promote global adherence to the provisions and objectives of the relevant conventions by all actors, both States not party and non-state armed groups.

In order for these agreements to have a global impact, as many states as possible should join them. Although several militarily active states are not party to the relevant conventions, some of them share the humanitarian rationale of these agreements.

#### Measures

2. a	Switzerland raises the issue of universalisation at the multilateral level and in bilateral dialogues with States not party, while also calling on them to comply with the basic rules of the relevant conventions.
2. b	Switzerland promotes dialogue with non-state armed groups with regard to compliance with international humanitarian law and the basic rules of the conventions in the field of mine action, including through deeds of commitment.

## 3.2 Humanitarian mine action on the ground



An EOD operator is preparing the dismantling of an IED during a training session delivered by UNMAS Somalia in Mogadishu. (© UNMAS Somalia).

### OBJECTIVE 3:

### **INCREASING THE SAFETY OF AFFECTED PEOPLE AND ENABLING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The strengthening of national ownership in a growing number of affected countries is encouraging. Nevertheless, many of these states and regions remain dependent on external support. For this reason, Switzerland will continue to invest a large part of its funds in the operational implementation of mine action programmes. In addition to the actual clearance work, two other central pillars of mine action are also supported: risk education and victim assistance.

The geographical focus is derived on the one hand from the existing needs on the ground. On the other hand, it is guided by the overarching guidelines of the Swiss foreign and security policy. The federal agencies involved coordinate their efforts in order to ensure the most efficient possible action on the ground.

In this area, Switzerland provides financial support to organisations active on the ground and deploys civilian and military experts to UN and OSCE programmes. In doing so, it makes use of synergies with related areas such as the safe storage and management of ammunition.

Clearing contaminated areas also promotes compliance with treaty deadlines by States Parties to the conventions on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. Furthermore, clearance can contribute to confidence-building between parties to a conflict.

Finally, mine action also contributes to social and economic development and to access to services. It enables the return of displaced persons and, thanks to clearance, fields can be cultivated again and destroyed infrastructure rebuilt. Its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goes even further. As GICHD studies on country contexts show,<sup>8</sup> the various pillars of mine action contribute to the achievement of almost all of the 17 goals and a large number of sub-goals of the 2030 Agenda. This includes the impact of mine action on the environment and its contribution to sustainable peace.

<sup>8</sup> Among others, on [Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lao PDR](#), [Cambodia](#), [Colombia](#) (in Spanish) and [Jordan](#).



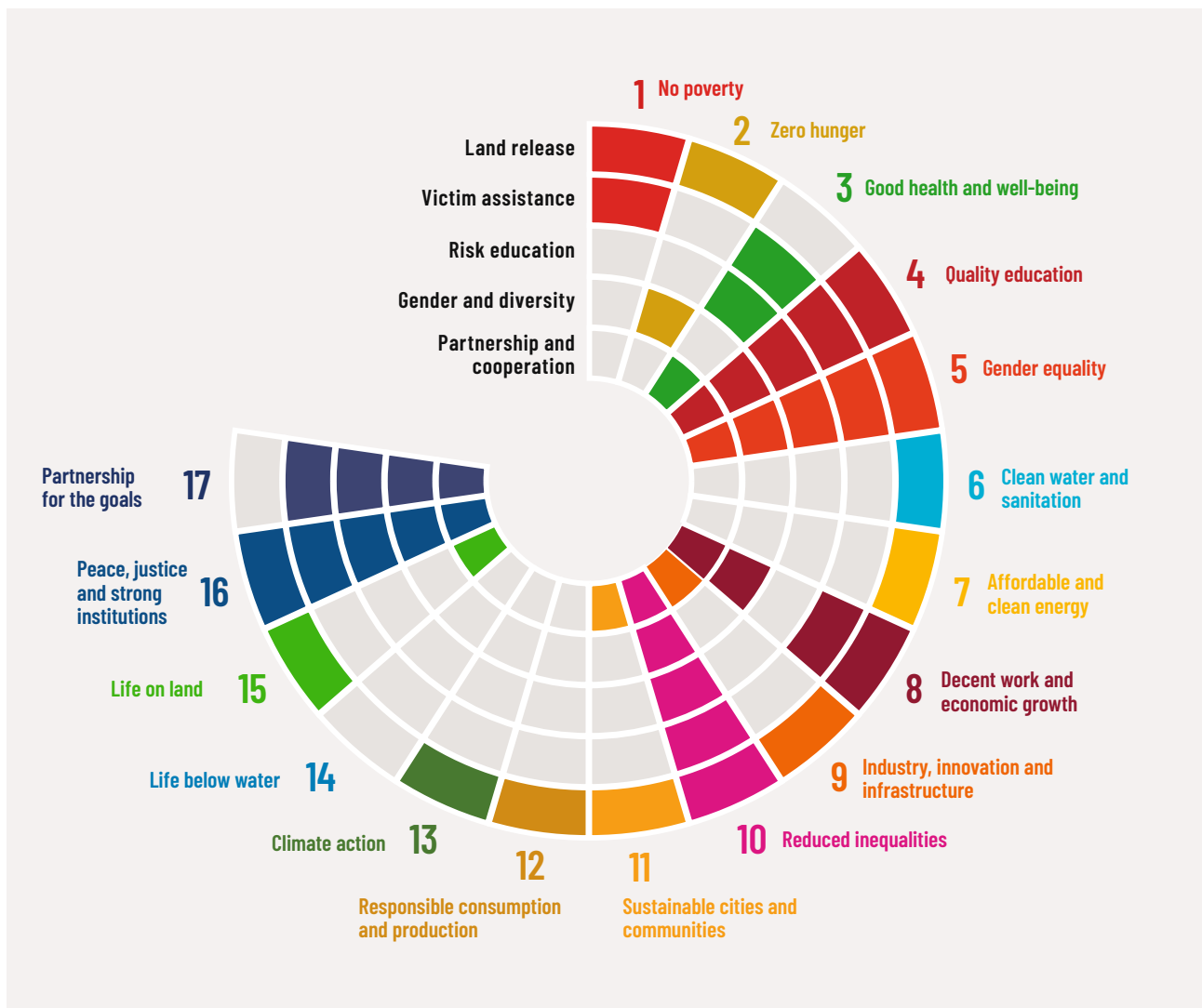


Figure 7: Contribution of mine action to the Sustainable Development Goals in Colombia (Source: GICHD).

**Measures**

3. a	Switzerland supports the survey and clearance of mines and other explosive ordnance through projects and technical expertise in order to reduce the risks for the population and to enable access to resources.
3. b	Switzerland promotes the prevention of accidents by educating affected communities about the dangers of mines and other explosive ordnance through projects on the ground and training courses.
3. c	Switzerland contributes to ensuring that victims of mines and other explosive ordnance receive comprehensive medical care, are referred to the responsible service providers and are socially and economically integrated.

**OBJECTIVE 4:  
PROMOTION OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP**



A Swiss Armed Forces expert (Swiss EOD Center) on mission for the UN mine action programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (© Tristan Chopard, SWISSINT).

The responsibility for humanitarian mine action lies in principle with the affected states. They have a right to request and receive assistance in fulfilling their obligations. The various conventions explicitly foresee the obligation of states to provide such assistance if they are in a position to do so.

Such assistance should always involve those affected on the ground and enable those responsible to set priorities themselves (key words: *empowerment, national ownership and localisation*). The COVID-19 pandemic in particular and the travel restrictions that went along with it have lent weight to the debate on this aspect and made the importance of creating national and sustainable capacities even clearer. Switzerland therefore intends to continue and intensify its support for the competent authorities to develop sustainable national capacities and to take responsibility for reducing the risks posed by mines and other explosive ordnance.

Mines and explosive ordnance injure and kill indiscriminately. However, mine action must address the different contributions and needs of women and men, boys and girls, people of all ages and social classes, and people with disabilities, as they may be affected differently. Interventions should always be tailored to the given context and take into account gender and other aspects of diversity. This not only leads to better inclusion, but also to better and more sustainable results in mine action, as more sources of information are used, e.g. in surveys.

**Measures**

4. a	Switzerland contributes to the needs-based capacity development of at least four UN and OSCE mine action programmes in 2023–2026 with its technical expertise.
4. b	Switzerland supports the further development and implementation of training opportunities at the international and regional level together with partners including the GICHD, UNMAS, UNOPS, UNDP and UNICEF.
4. c	Switzerland promotes the consideration of diversity (such as gender, age and disability) in the implementation of this Action Plan and advocates for the equal participation of women in humanitarian mine action.

## 3.2.1 Focus on Ukraine

### OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

Switzerland will continue to support mine action in a wide range of geographical contexts. Since 24 February 2022, however, the focus has been on Ukraine in particular. Russia's military aggression and the related armed conflict in Ukraine are causing many casualties and extensive contamination by mines and other explosive ordnance, e.g. as a result of the intensive artillery and air attacks. According to credible reports, anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, booby traps and cluster munitions have also been used in Ukraine. As a result, the lives of millions of people are at risk. Clearance will take many years, even with significant resources, and will be complex, partly due to the variety of munitions used and the high levels of contamination in urban areas. Nevertheless, humanitarian mine action in Ukraine is a prerequisite for humanitarian access, the return of displaced persons, the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, social and economic recovery, including agriculture, and sustainable development.

Switzerland already supported Ukraine in 2022 in cooperation with partner organisations such as the GICHD and the

*Fondation suisse de déminage* (FSD). The DDPS has been financing training courses through the GICHD since July 2022, and in Western Ukraine since autumn 2022. For its part, the FDFA supported risk education through an FSD project and promoted coordination in the field of mine action, including through an international meeting of all key actors in Geneva organised by the GICHD.

In the coming years, multi-year mine action support to Ukraine will be expanded along various lines of action. Swiss mine action expertise will be used to create specific added value with respect to Ukrainian needs. The extent of concrete implementation is resource-dependent.

#### Measures

5. a	Switzerland supports the national authorities of Ukraine and strengthens their capacities, in particular through the GICHD.
5. b	It finances in particular activities to clear mines and other explosive ordnance in Ukraine.
5. c	It provides Ukraine with material for humanitarian mine action.

## 3.3 Innovation

### OBJECTIVE 6:

#### PROMOTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION STANDARDS AND THEIR ADAPTATION TO NEW CHALLENGES

The International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) are a widely accepted instrument that can be applied by all actors. More detailed national mine standards and *standard operating procedures* (SOPs) are developed on their basis. Therefore, the IMAS require constant adaptation to new challenges, expansion,

and translation into additional languages. Along with the UN, the GICHD is one of the central actors in standard-setting. From Switzerland's perspective, it is essential that the IMAS remain relevant in new contexts and are applied universally.

#### Measures

6. a	Switzerland supports the application of the International Mine Action Standards through projects and deployments.
6. b	It promotes the standards' adaptation to new challenges and their dissemination, including through training courses.
6. c	It provides expertise and takes an active role in standard-setting bodies.

#### Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining



The *Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining* (GICHD) was founded in Geneva on 28 April 1998 at the initiative of Switzerland. It works to reduce the risks posed by explosive ordnance, with a focus on landmines, cluster munitions and stockpiles of ammunition. The GICHD is contributing significantly to the continuous development and implementation of the IMAS, through its substantial and secretarial role in the IMAS' governance as well as its upstream work with national authorities. The Centre contributes to the development and professionalisation of the sector, which benefits its

partners: national and local authorities, donors, the UN, other international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, business enterprises and academic institutions. It supports around 40 affected states and territories each year. Switzerland currently contributes over CHF 9.5 million annually to the GICHD – approximately 50% of its budget – through the framework credit 2020–2023 for the three Geneva Centres.

**OBJECTIVE 7:  
PROMOTION OF THE USE OF PROMISING TECHNOLOGIES AND METHODS**



*An UNMAS team in war-torn Mosul, Iraq, searches for explosive remnants of war in the rubble. Slow and dangerous work. (© UNMAS/Cengiz Yar).*

Certain technological developments have the potential to make mine action as a whole safer, more efficient and more responsive to needs. The focus is specifically on the detection of explosive ordnance, risk education and the development of interactive data management. Contamination in urban areas and the use of IEDs pose special challenges for mine action. The search and clearance of explosive ordnance is particularly complex as well as time- and cost-intensive. Technological innovations promise to increase quality, efficiency, accuracy and safety in the search for mines and other explosive ordnance. It

remains essential that the needs on the ground are adequately taken into account and that quality standards continue to be maintained. Close cooperation between the scientific community, industry, and demining organisations is essential for this. The links between these actors in and around Geneva lend themselves to such partnerships. Work in this area is closely coordinated within the Federal Administration.

**Measures**

7. a	Switzerland supports the GICHD’s mine action technology workshops to promote effective innovative technology.
7. b	Switzerland supports the networking of research, industry and mine action organisations for the purpose of needs assessments and the development of solutions, particularly in the field of explosive ordnance detection.

# 4 Implementation and reporting

The implementation of the Action Plan pursues a holistic *whole-of-government* approach, taking the form of interdepartmental cooperation between the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). Coordination takes place in the Mine Action Coordination Committee (KAM), with diplomatic work being coordinated under the leadership of the FDFA and operational coordination under the direction of the DDPS. In the future, the KAM will discuss the status of implementation of the various goals of the Action Plan **every six months** and report once a year.

The FDFA is the lead agency in the field of humanitarian diplomacy. The **Peace and Human Rights Division** (PHRD) in the State Secretariat is responsible for coordination. It also supports mine action activities as part of its measures for civilian peacebuilding and strengthening human rights.

The **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** (SDC) of the FDFA supports the efforts in the field of mine action as part of its humanitarian and development commitment.

The FDFA's **Directorate of International Law** (DIL) monitors developments in mine action and its forums that are relevant under international law and advises the official agencies involved on legal issues. It is committed to the clarification and further development of the legal framework.

**Switzerland's Permanent Missions to the UN**, particularly in Geneva, are responsible for the permanent protection of Switzerland's interests in the relevant international forums on mine action. This also includes host state policy.

The **DDPS** supports mine action primarily by sending members of the armed forces deployed on the basis of the Military Act, primarily within the framework of military peace support in UN or OSCE programmes. Furthermore, the DDPS conducts training courses and contributes to their financing. The armed forces can also support clearance programmes with special equipment and supplies. Finally, the DDPS provides expertise – primarily from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Mine Action Command (Swiss EOD Center) – to expert committees and can conduct on-site evaluations on behalf of the FDFA.

Switzerland continues its institutional partnership with the **GICHD** as an international centre of excellence for explosive ordnance risk reduction, including mine action. The GICHD supports Switzerland in achieving the goals of this Action Plan, while the Swiss Confederation promotes the implementation of the Centre's strategic objectives. The FDFA and the DDPS are represented on the Council of Foundation of the GICHD.

Switzerland pursues a partnership approach in the implementation of the Action Plan. It already uses a close-knit network of **partnerships** with governments, international and regional organisations and NGOs. Particularly noteworthy are the UN, including its sub-organisations such as UNMAS, UNOPS, UNDP and UNICEF, the ICRC and the OSCE. National and international NGOs also play an important role, contributing to all five pillars of mine action, addressing challenges, providing solutions and demanding public accountability. Finally, the exchange with science and industry is also promoted in order to find solutions for upcoming challenges.

Switzerland reviews the use of funds and the achievement of objectives by means of internal and external control mechanisms and with the involvement of the affected actors on the ground. This evaluation is an ongoing task.

# Annex 1

## List of abbreviations

<b>ADN</b>	Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation
<b>APMBC</b>	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction
<b>CCM</b>	Convention on Cluster Munitions
<b>CCW</b>	Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>DDPS</b>	Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport
<b>DIL</b>	Directorate of International Law
<b>EORE</b>	Explosive Ordnance Risk Education
<b>FDFA</b>	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>GICHD</b>	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
<b>IED</b>	Improvised Explosive Device
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IMAS</b>	International Mine Action Standard
<b>KAM</b>	Interdepartmental Coordination Committee on Mine Action ( <i>Interdepartementaler Koordinationsausschuss Humanitäre Minenräumung</i> )
<b>PHRD</b>	Peace and Human Rights Division
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>Swiss EOD</b>	
<b>Center</b>	Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Mine Action Command of the Swiss Armed Forces
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNMAS</b>	United Nations Mine Action Service
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services

# Annex 2: Glossary ↪

**2030 Agenda:** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals forms a global frame of reference regarding the three inextricably-linked dimensions of the economy, the environment and society. Switzerland recognises the 2030 Agenda as an important orientation framework. Although it is not a legally binding, it provides a mechanism for setting domestic and foreign policy objectives and forming opinions. It also serves as a frame of reference for digital foreign policy.

**Advocacy to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions:** Advocacy includes activities to mobilise support for mine action and to persuade states to accede to, ratify and implement the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and other relevant international conventions, and to persuade all parties to armed conflict to abide by the norms contained in these international conventions.

**Ammunition:** In arms control policy, ammunition is defined as a device charged with explosives, propellants, pyrotechnics, initiating composition, or nuclear, biological or chemical material. A distinction is made between ammunition for weapons of mass destruction and ammunition for conventional weapons. Conventional ammunition includes ammunition for small arms and light weapons (see 'Small arms and light weapons'), ammunition for major weapon and equipment systems, rockets, landmines and other types of mines as well as other conventional ammunition.

**Clearance of mines and other explosive ordnance:** This term refers to tasks or actions to ensure the removal and/or the destruction of all explosive ordnance from a specified area to a specified depth or other agreed parameters.

**Cluster munitions:** Cluster munitions belong to the family of conventional weapons and are designed to disperse or release certain explosive sub-munitions. In this context, see also the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

**Conventional weapons:** Conventional weapons are all weapons that are not weapons of mass destruction. Heavy conventional weapons include, for example, combat tanks, artillery systems, armoured combat vehicles, combat helicopters, fighter aircraft and warships. Small arms and light weapons also come under the conventional weapons category (see 'Small arms and light weapons'), as well as anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions, and other types of conventional munitions.

**Disarmament:** Disarmament refers to national and international efforts to reduce the quantity of arms or to limit their effects, in order to increase international stability and security. Switzerland is committed to an international ban and the elimination of all categories of weapons of mass destruction.

**Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE):** EORE refers to activities which seek to reduce the risk of injury from EO by raising the awareness of women, girls, boys and men in accordance with their different vulnerabilities, roles and needs, and promoting behavioural change. Core activities include public information dissemination, education and training.

**Human Rights:** Human rights are inherent and inalienable rights that all people enjoy without distinction by virtue of their being human. They are crucial to the protection of human dignity, physical and psychological integrity and are an important foundation for the development of every individual. They are the basis of the peaceful coexistence of nations. They are guarantors of a society based on the obligation to respect the rights of the individual. They apply in both international relations and domestic policy, but also at the place of residence of every individual. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interrelated. Every state is obliged to respect, protect and implement human rights.

**Humanitarian principles:** Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are key values and principles of humanitarian action. They were laid down in the Code of Conduct of the Red Cross Movement, and by the UN General Assembly.

**International Geneva:** Geneva is the heart of the multilateral system and the location of the UN's European headquarters. Thirty-eight international organisations, programmes and funds, as well as 179 states and 750 NGOs are represented there. International Geneva provides 45,000 jobs and contributes more than 11% to the GDP of the canton (1% of Swiss GDP). Around 3,300 international conferences are held in Geneva every year, the main themes of which are: 1) peace, security, disarmament; 2) humanitarian aid and international humanitarian law, human rights, migration; 3) labour, economy, trade, science, telecommunication; 4) health; 5) the environment and sustainable development.

**International humanitarian law:** International humanitarian law governs the conduct of hostilities and protects the victims of armed conflicts. It applies in all international and non-international armed conflicts, regardless of the legitimacy or cause of the use of force.



**Military peace support:** Military peace support comprises contributions in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management within the framework of international security co-operation.

**Military mine and explosive ordnance clearance:** Military mine and explosive ordnance clearance primarily serves the protection of a country's own troops or the fulfilment of tasks or mandates and can, under certain circumstances, be seen as an act of combat. A long-term solution to the mine problem is not being pursued.

**Mine action:** Mine action refers to all activities which aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, including unexploded sub-munitions. It comprises five complementary groups of activities: risk education, humanitarian demining (including surveys, mapping, marking and clearance of contaminated areas), victim assistance (including medical care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration), stockpile destruction and advocacy for the ban of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

**Mines:** A mine is a munition designed to be placed under, on or near the ground or other surface and to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person or a vehicle.

**Peacebuilding:** Civilian peacebuilding includes contributions to the prevention, mitigation and resolution of violent conflicts, in particular through confidence-building, mediation and the promotion of international humanitarian law and human rights (see 'International humanitarian law'). Post-conflict peacebuilding activities comprise a range of activities, including dealing with the past, contributions to promoting democratic processes and elections, and strengthening human rights. Peacebuilding creates and reinforces the framework conditions necessary for sustainable development. It comprises both civilian and military measures.

**Small arms and light weapons:** Man-portable weapons. Small arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and assault rifles. Light weapons are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. They include, inter alia, heavy machine guns, portable anti-aircraft guns and mortars of a calibre of less than 100 millimetres.

**Stockpile destruction:** Stockpile destruction refers to the physical destructive procedure towards a continual reduction

of the stockpile of mines and other explosive ordnance, such as cluster munitions.

**Triple nexus approach:** Nexus means linking. The growing complexity, longer duration and increasing frequency of humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, extreme natural events and epidemics make necessary the integrated deployment of the three foreign policy instruments – humanitarian aid, long-term development cooperation and peacebuilding – in order to achieve more sustainable impact in crisis contexts. Simultaneously alleviating recurring humanitarian need and achieving longer-term development goals represents a major challenge. The triple nexus – also known as the humanitarian/development/peace nexus – combines and harmonises these three instruments. This means poverty, armed conflict and the underlying multisectoral causes of crises are addressed in a holistic manner.

**Universalisation:** Universal application or applicability of a certain norm.

**Victim assistance:** Victim assistance in the context of mine action refers to a set of activities addressing the needs and rights of EO victims and comprises emergency and ongoing medical care, rehabilitation, psychological and psycho-social support, and socio-economic inclusion. Victim assistance also includes data collection, laws, and policies. The term 'victim' refers individually or collectively to persons who have suffered physical, emotional or psychological injury, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights through acts or omissions related to the use of mines and other explosive ordnance. Victims include people injured and killed, their families, and communities affected by mines and other explosive ordnance.





## Imprint

### Editors:

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
3003 Bern  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch)

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS  
3003 Bern  
[www.ddps.admin.ch](http://www.ddps.admin.ch)

### Date of publication:

4 April 2023

### Design:

Audiovisual Team, FDFA Communication  
Armed Forces Digital Media Centre DDPS (81.272e)

### Cover photo:

Ukraine, © Sean Sutton / MAG

### Maps:

The boundaries and names shown, as well as the designations used on the maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Switzerland.

### Orders:

[publikationen@eda.admin.ch](mailto:publikationen@eda.admin.ch)

### Specialist contact:

Peace and Human Rights Division  
3003 Bern  
Email: [sts.afm@eda.admin.ch](mailto:sts.afm@eda.admin.ch)

Humanitarian Demining, International Relations Defence,  
Armed Forces Staff, DDPS  
3003 Bern  
Email: [HMR.ASTAB@vtg.admin.ch](mailto:HMR.ASTAB@vtg.admin.ch)

This publication is also available in French, German and Italian. It can be downloaded from the FDFA's website: [www.fdfa.admin.ch/strategy](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/strategy).