



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - New York

## **Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine and its consequences for Food Security**

**Date and time:** Thursday 22 February, 1.15 pm

**Venue:** United Nations Headquarters

### **BACKGROUND**

Ukraine's vast agricultural land faces extensive contamination, threatening its economy sustainability and raising concerns of a food crisis by disrupting the food supply chain. Since the launch of its full-scale invasion two years ago, the Russian Federation has been using weapons prohibited by international laws resulting in extensive mine contamination. The attacks have led to 30% of Ukrainian lands currently at risk of landmines and other explosive ordnance contamination. Ukraine is now among the most heavily mine-contaminated countries globally, with an estimated one-third of its territory suspected to have some form of contamination. The ongoing war has damaged Ukraine's agriculture and food production, increasing production costs. International partners and the United Nations collaborate closely with Ukrainian authorities to strengthen operational support through funds and expertise, aiming for a more efficient response to the risks posed by explosive remnants of war.

Humanitarian demining plays a crucial role in the safe restoration of land for civilian use, serving as a prerequisite for economic recovery and a pivotal step toward rebuilding resilient and prosperous rural communities. Ultimately, this process significantly mitigates the impact of land contamination on food security.

### **PROGRESSES AND CHALLENGES**

Thanks to the United Nations and international donors, and thanks to the work of the Government of Ukraine and its National Demining Strategy, progress has been made. Compared to January 2023, 18.000 km<sup>2</sup> of territories returned to productive use. However, challenges persist.

The 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, launched by OCHA in January, targets 2 million people out of 6.7 million in need of Mine Action assistance, requiring \$87.7 million. Emphasis in 2024 will be put on expanding Non-Technical Survey activities to release most of the suspected contaminated land, mark contaminated areas and contribute to the Government of

Ukraine's strategy to reduce existing potentially contaminated territories by 80 % within the next five years.

Despite the rapid response of the international community, which deployed a substantial capacity, expanded training for qualified personnel, and provided significant funding, the situation remains extremely complicated. Some of the challenges include the vast expanse of the agricultural land and the dynamic situation and proximity to the ongoing conflict. The nature of the contamination adds another layer of complexity, encompassing various types of conventional, booby-trapped and improvised explosive ordnance. Additionally, there exists a challenge related to the perception of areas suspected to be contaminated, hindering the utilization of land until confirmation of contamination or evidence of the absence of mines is established.

In this context, the implications for Food Security are numerous. Firstly, there exists agricultural disruption, as landmines curtail access to fertile land, impeding farmers from cultivating crops and obstructing the growth of the agricultural sector. Additionally, the displacement of farmers ensues due to the presence of landmines, compelling them to abandon their land, thereby causing displacement and further aggravating food insecurity. Furthermore, the contamination of water sources by landmines may occur, impacting irrigation systems and compromising the quality of water for agricultural use. There is also a discernible impact on livestock, with landmines posing a threat that limits grazing areas, thereby affecting the overall productivity of animals. Other repercussions include the disruption of transportation networks and infrastructure, leading to food wastage and shortages in markets, as well as delayed recovery, due to prolonged impact of in a post-conflict scenario.

Looking forward, it is essential to explore innovative approaches to address the challenges at hand. Notably, technological advancements present promising tools, including harnessing Artificial Intelligence for comprehensive Big Data compilation and analysis, along with remote imaging facilitated by drones and satellites to delineate the nature and extent of contamination.

## OBJECTIVES

- **Presenting Ukraine's Demining Needs.** Highlight the gravity of mine contamination in Ukraine resulting from the ongoing conflict. Emphasize the needs for comprehensive mine action plan, encompassing funding, equipment, and training.
- **Strategies for demining.** Provide valuable insights into effective demining strategies and tailored solutions to address Ukraine's unique challenges. Showcase the latest developments in the Ukrainian Mine Action Response.
- **Consequences for Food Security.** Foster coherent synergies within the humanitarian community to mitigate the impact on food security resulting from the consequences of mine contamination.