

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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

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**MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND
ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION**

New York, 4 April 2021

I am very pleased to add my voice today to that of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and many other leaders, activists, and concerned citizens, to call on all nations to keep their eye on the end-goal of ridding the world of landmines and explosive remnants of war. It takes determination.

As we come out of the shadow of the pandemic, I want to praise the men and women who steadfastly stuck to their routines and cleared and destroyed hundreds of thousands of explosives in 2020, from landmines, to unexploded bombs and improvised explosive devices. Work continued because individuals, organizations and governments stuck to it.

A new Safe Ground was built in Cambodia, Chile declared its territory mine-free, and all states party to the Mine Ban Convention have declared their intention to clear their territories of anti-personnel landmines by the end of this decade.

But there is new contamination. Last month we marked the 10-year anniversary of the war in Syria, a conflict that has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions displaced and thousands of tons of new explosive contamination. The fighting needs to stop. The clearance needs to begin in earnest and at scale.

And there is old contamination. The Viet Nam war officially ended more than 45 years ago, but landmines and explosive contamination still pollute wide swaths of territory.

One landmine can wreck a community: kill a father, a mother, and all too often a child.

The vision we must strive to attain is a world where individuals and communities live in safe homes, on safe ground, in safe environments. Where human rights, the right to life, liberty, personal security and basic needs are met and no one is left behind, including the survivors of explosive ordnance accidents, those wounded and disabled, who must be fully integrated as equal members of their societies.

April 4th is the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, please do whatever you can, in whatever position you hold, to reach this vision. Let's stay focused.