



2015 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2012 – 2015

The present report complements the previous reports on the Swiss Confederation's commitment to humanitarian mine action and constitutes an update on activities in 2015.

Under the *Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2012 – 2015*¹, Switzerland pursues the long-term vision of a world without new victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war – a world in which economic and social development progresses smoothly and the needs of the affected populations are adequately met.

Switzerland's commitment is based on various instruments of international law, such as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention ("Ottawa Treaty" ratified by 162 States Parties²), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (ratified by 98 States Parties³) and the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Swiss efforts at the political and operational levels are in the hands of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), acting in close consultation with other governments, international organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and civil society.

1. Overview

Thanks to the efforts of the international community, the number of victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war has continued to fall. There is nonetheless a need to provide survivors with suitable medical assistance while supporting the socio-economic development of the populations affected. In this context one needs to bear in mind the fact that large tracts of land are often rendered useless for years, seriously limiting livelihoods.

In the year under review (2015), the Confederation continued to support programmes to clear contaminated areas to ensure that they could be used again by local communities.⁴ In addition, it funded projects to inform communities of the dangers and thus prevent new victims.

Although the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions has been widely declared to be no longer acceptable, global recognition of a ban on these weapons has as yet not been achieved. A number of countries have still to make international commitments to this effect. These weapons continue to be used by various parties to conflicts such as those in Syria and Ukraine and, most recently, Yemen.

In the past year, the Confederation spent around CHF 18.5 million on the implementation of its mine action strategy. About half of this amount (CHF 8.69 million) again went to the GICHD.

¹ See also: [Mine Action Strategy 2012-2015](#)

² As at 1 February 2016

³ As at 1 February 2016

⁴ Facts and figures on the situation in the individual countries and worldwide commitments: www.the-monitor.org/

2. Objectives and implementation of the Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation

Switzerland plays an active role in the implementation of the relevant international treaties. This reflects a long-standing humanitarian tradition and is intended to strengthen Switzerland's commitment to human security, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and both civilian and military peace promotion. Switzerland, as a host country, also has an interest in being able to position Geneva as an important platform for key institutions in the area of disarmament. The worldwide renown of institutions such as the GICHD and the presence in Geneva of the implementation support units of the relevant conventions are indicative of the heightened importance of Geneva as a centre of expertise on conventional disarmament. This trend should be developed further if possible.

To ensure the most efficient and effective realisation of its vision of a world without new victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, the Confederation set itself **four strategic objectives** for the 2012 – 2015 period, which are being implemented by the FDFA and the DDPS in close coordination.

2.1. Switzerland takes a proactive approach to implementing and strengthening the key conventions, notably the Ottawa Treaty but also the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, with a view to the eventual universal application of these conventions.

Switzerland also took concrete steps once again in 2015 to ensure the implementation of the ban on anti-personnel weapons and cluster munitions at both the technical and political levels. A key aim in this respect is to strengthen the institutional framework and the international legal instruments which Switzerland has ratified. Specifically, Switzerland is a member of various committees that support the implementation of the treaties; it also supports the chairmanship of the respective negotiations and the GICHD's thematic work, and promotes the work of the conventions' implementation support units to ensure broad support for the conducting of negotiations. In addition to its contribution to the GICHD and about CHF 390,000 for the Implementation Support Unit of the Ottawa Treaty, Switzerland contributed around CHF 950,000 to fund policy work, support for meetings of the states parties and projects to support the conventions worldwide.

At the Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions held in Croatia in September 2015 in particular, Switzerland helped pave the way for ground-breaking decisions that set a course for the next five years. Switzerland advocated, for example, the process of achieving universal recognition of the convention and compliance with treaty obligations. In particular, it actively supported the creation of the action plan for the 2016-2020 period, in which the States Parties set themselves pragmatic and measurable implementation goals in relation to universalisation, stockpile destruction, clearance and risk reduction education, victim assistance, international cooperation and assistance, transparency measures and national implementation measures. Switzerland also successfully campaigned for the operations of the Convention's implementation support unit in Geneva to be placed on a sustainable financial basis.

With respect to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, in 2015 Switzerland continued to work together with Mexico, Indonesia and Colombia in the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance, with a focus on fostering partnerships for the completion of mine clearance commitments. Here too, Switzerland successfully supported the international community in its efforts to bring to an end the years of uncertainty regarding the financing of the Convention's implementation support unit by adopting a funding model that is acceptable to all the stakeholders.

The solutions reached under the two conventions for the financing of their implementation support units can be regarded as a key development in the year under review – one which helps strengthen the institutions involved in the respective disarmament treaties, thereby ensuring that implementation work can continue. The fact that the two implementation support units have been placed on a sound financial footing also serves to enhance Geneva's status as a key UN centre for humanitarian and disarmament policy issues. Alongside further decisions on conventional arms control, disarmament and export control, especially in relation to the Arms Trade Treaty and the hosting of its secretariat in Geneva, the progress achieved in the reporting year through international efforts to foster peace and security with regard to conventional weapons entirely matched Swiss expectations.

At the national level, the destruction of Switzerland's own stockpile of cluster munitions (cargo rounds) continues. They will be destroyed within the legal deadline of eight years.

Switzerland's political efforts also include advocating against the use of anti-personnel mines by armed non-state actors. In accordance with its humanitarian principles, Switzerland has continued to support the Geneva-based NGO *Geneva Call*, which promotes compliance with the international norms of the Ottawa Treaty by armed non-state actors in various countries (e.g. Syria). Forty-nine non-state actors have now signed the *Deed of Commitment*⁵, thereby undertaking to no longer use anti-personnel mines and to clear mines from their territory.

2.2. Switzerland is committed to improving the living conditions of populations exposed to anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

During the year under review, ten members of the Swiss Armed Forces took part in UN demining programmes at a cost of over CHF 1.7 million. These deployments focused on the development of local capacities and on training local personnel in mine action, and also included the development of the necessary management and leadership structures.

The year under review saw another deployment of both Swiss militia personnel and professional military personnel from the Centre of Competence of the Swiss Armed Forces for Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Demining (EOD) to programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Western Sahara, and to the UN headquarters in New York. The militia members were employed in logistics and information management (IMSMA). A civilian expert from the FDFA is also seconded to the UN in Geneva. This combination of basic military know-how and leadership skills with civilian expertise has proven ideal for this kind of deployment. Each year, the Swiss Armed Forces together with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) offers international advanced training in mine action within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). In 2015, they were joined for the first time by UN partners. The main aim is to provide training at all levels in the international standards of mine action for civilian and military personnel. The two new training courses being run in collaboration with UNOPS (UN Office for Project Services) will be attended by Swiss militia experts engaged in the field of logistics as part of the compulsory preparation for their mission. Five PfP courses

⁵ www.genevacall.org (as at February 2016)

and two IMSMA training courses were held in the year under review, attended by a total of more than 100 participants from almost 40 countries and organisations.



Swiss logistics advisor working for the UN mine action programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo: training the handling of the generator

In addition, Switzerland has provided support worth about CHF 7.5 million to projects in the priority countries and regions of Swiss humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding efforts, notably Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Gaza, Kosovo, Laos, Libya, Mali and Myanmar.

2.3. Switzerland is pursuing further the integration of its mine action strategy with other policy areas so as to achieve synergies. Monitoring and evaluation instruments have been developed to help make the impact of these activities more visible.

Switzerland concentrates its efforts against landmines and other explosive remnants of war in countries where synergies can be created with humanitarian aid, development cooperation and civilian and military peace promotion, thereby achieving complementarities, for instance, with projects in the areas of rural development, food security and protection of the civilian population. The concerns addressed by the Confederation's mine action strategy are mirrored and strengthened in other thematic and geographical strategies.

Switzerland is aware that the effective monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian mine action efforts is one of the biggest challenges for members of the international community that are active in this field. Switzerland therefore continues to engage in regular exchanges with international partners, including the UN and civil society, in order to develop efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation tools for mine-related programmes. While the mine action projects supported by Switzerland are of course followed up in the normal way, questions nonetheless continue to be raised on specific and methodological issues such as the most relevant way to gauge the impact of Switzerland's commitment and to ensure that the necessary lessons are learned.

2.4. Switzerland proactively contributes, in line with its own national interests, to the development of new instruments that will take due account of future challenges as they arise.

Switzerland also plays an active part in ongoing debates both at the political level within the framework of the conventions and at the operational level. The substantial Swiss contribution to the GICHD also makes it possible to promote international standards in this field and to finance research and development into new technologies and methods designed to improve still further the effectiveness of the various programmes and projects. This not only applies to demining itself but also to other areas such as support for victims.

3. Summary and conclusions

During the year under review further progress was made towards achieving the goals set out in the Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2012 – 2015. The orientation of Switzerland's mine action policy and its operational implementation have proven successful. The following points are worth emphasising:

- In the year under review, Switzerland continued its efforts to alleviate the risks posed by mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war in numerous countries. On the basis of its humanitarian, peace and development policies, it provided projects with support in the form of expertise and seconded personnel, in addition to financial backing. Self-help and local capacity-building were once again priority issues. With Swiss support, mine action in Colombia helped establish peace in what had been one of the world's longest civil wars, thus providing an example of the positive role that humanitarian demining can play in peace processes specifically.
- At the same time, Switzerland continued its policy work in the reporting year, both in a variety of multilateral forums and through its bilateral contacts, where priority was given to the creation and development of political processes that promote mine action. In this context, Switzerland also seeks to counter signs of political fatigue in relation to mine action and advocates for institutional strengthening.
- Through financial and political support for the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the provision of training courses at all levels, Switzerland is doing much to help make mine action efforts more rapid, safe and effective, as well as less costly.

Lastly, Switzerland reviewed its strategy for 2012-2015 in the year under review and is currently finalising the *Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016 – 2019*. An external evaluation conducted at the start of the process clearly confirmed that the methods and instruments adopted by Switzerland remain appropriate and relevant; however, the results of the evaluation also serve to adapt the Confederation's strategic objectives, priorities and activities in line with present-day challenges.