



2014 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 2014.

The aim of the Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2012 – 2015¹ is to make a real contribution towards a world free of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

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 Parties)², the Convention on Cluster Munitions (ratified by 89 States Parties)³, 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) 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 (2014), the Confederation continued to support programmes to clear hazardous 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 deployment of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions has been widely declared to be no longer acceptable, no global ban has as yet been imposed on these weapons. Important countries have yet to adopt the relevant international conventions. These weapons continue to be used by various parties to conflicts such as the Syrian conflict and, most recently, the conflict in Ukraine.

In the past year the Confederation spent a total of CHF 19.1 million on the implementation of its humanitarian demining strategy. About half of this amount (CHF 8.71) went again to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

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

² As at 1 February 2015

³ As at 1 February 2015

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 in this area. This reflects a long-standing humanitarian tradition and is intended to strengthen Switzerland's commitment to human security, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and civil and military peace promotion. Switzerland 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 secretariats of the relevant conventions are indicative of the continuing 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 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 in 2014 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 supports the chairmanship of the respective negotiations and the GICHD's thematic work, and promotes the work of the conventions' secretariats to ensure broad support for the conducting of negotiations. In addition to its contribution to the GICHD and about CHF 0.53 million for the secretariat of the Ottawa Treaty, Switzerland contributed about CHF 800,000 to fund policy work, support for meetings of the states parties and projects to support the conventions worldwide.

At the Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention held in Mozambique in June 2014 in particular, Switzerland helped shape ground-breaking decisions for the next five years. Switzerland advocated, for example, the further universalisation of the convention and compliance with treaty obligations. At the same time, Switzerland warned that international efforts must not be neglected, as there are still numerous complex challenges. It was once again made clear that the problem of anti-personnel mines will continue to occupy the international community for many years to come, particularly in view of the alleged treaty violations by certain states and the fact that demining is proceeding at too slow a pace in many countries.

With respect to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in 2014 Switzerland continued to work together with Laos and with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Working Group on Clearance and Risk Reduction. The working group highlighted, in collaboration with experts, the particular importance of technically sound investigations and data collection. Switzerland was thus actively involved in the preparations for the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions to be held in Croatia in September 2015.

At the national level, the destruction of Switzerland's own stockpile of cluster munitions (cargo rounds) continues. The legal deadline for their destruction is eight years.

Switzerland's political efforts also include work 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-eight non-state groups have signed the *Deed of Commitment*⁵, thereby undertaking to no longer use anti-personnel mines and to clear mines from their territory. For example, a Syrian group, the Hazzm Movement, signed the declaration in June 2014.

Finally, the opening of the *Maison de la Paix* on 3 October 2014 in Geneva was also of central importance to the institutional establishment of humanitarian mine action. The *Maison de la Paix* has strengthened Switzerland's political commitment to peace and enabled the GICHD, the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – and from the summer of 2015 also the ISU of the Convention on Cluster Munitions – to benefit from closer ties with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), as well as with other organisations and think tanks active in the area of peace and security.

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, 11 members of the Swiss Armed Forces took part in UN demining programmes at a cost of over CHF 2.3 million. These deployments focused on the development of local capacities and on training 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, Somaliland and Puntland, South Sudan, Western Sahara, and to the UN headquarters in New York. The militia members were employed in logistics and finance as well as administration 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 humanitarian demining within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The main aim is to provide training at all levels in the international standards of mine action for civilians, military personnel and civil society experts. The two fully booked courses organised in the year under review were attended by almost 50 persons from 29 countries or organisations.

Switzerland has provided support worth about CHF 7.21 million to projects in the priority countries and regions of Swiss humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding efforts, notably Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Gaza, Laos, Libya, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Philippines, Somalia/Somaliland, Sri Lanka, South Sudan and Syria.

⁵ www.genevacall.org

The support provided by Switzerland ranges from ad hoc assistance as in the case of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in the Philippines, when an armaments and munitions depot was washed away and posed a threat to the returning population, to major long-term programmes, for example in Laos and Cambodia, where the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is actively engaged, these two countries being among those most affected by cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

Success story: Somaliland/Puntland

Switzerland's over 15 years of work in Somaliland and Puntland on behalf of the UN was successfully completed in January 2015. Thanks to the long-term deployment of experts in information management and finance, as well as explosives experts, a strategy of "helping people to help themselves" and "local empowerment" was implemented and the local authorities' capacity-building efforts were supported. The construction of a mine action centre in each territory was therefore a priority. Now that the international experts have left, both Somaliland and Puntland are able to carry out ordnance disposal tasks independently.



An expert from the Centre of Competence of the Swiss Armed Forces for Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Demining (EOD) training Somali explosives experts.

Switzerland's concrete support included two explosive ordnance disposal training courses taught on-site by the EOD. Thirty-six specialists were trained on-site in these tailor-made short-term training courses.

The first objective, namely the creation of local capacities and the establishment of local mine action centres, was thus achieved through patient preparatory work. The new centres are now tasked with developing and transmitting their capabilities and continuing the work they have begun on a sustainable basis.

2.3. Switzerland integrates 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 engages 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 in specific areas such as methodology about the most relevant way possible to gauge the impact of Switzerland's commitment and to ensure that the necessary lessons are learned.

In view of the revision of the mine action strategy of the Swiss Confederation and a subsequent strategy for the legislative period 2016-2019, an evaluation of the strategy currently in place was begun in the autumn of 2014. The results of the evaluation will be incorporated into the new strategy.

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 Strategy of the

Swiss Confederation on Humanitarian Mine Clearing 2012 – 2015. The orientation of Switzerland's humanitarian demining policy and its operational implementation have proven successful. The following points are worth emphasising:

- Switzerland's political efforts contributed to the success of the Third Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty in Mozambique in June 2014, demonstrating once again that it is a committed and reliable partner in the fight for a mine-free world. But Switzerland also notes with concern that there are signs of a flagging momentum and a certain fatigue in humanitarian mine action efforts. For example, Switzerland is one of a small number of countries that have recently been able to maintain their financial contributions generally at the same level as before and even to increase them to some extent. The challenge in 2015 is to keep the topic on the international

agenda and to reverse declining trends in political and financial commitments, and to contribute thereby to a comprehensive and effective approach to achieve the goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

- Through its political efforts, Switzerland is actively contributing to the universalisation of international legal instruments. Recent conflicts in various countries and regions show that much remains to be done in this respect. Through its political efforts, Switzerland also continues to support the strengthening of the institutional framework and the pragmatic implementation of treaty obligations. In this context, Geneva still plays a key role as a centre of expertise for disarmament affairs – a role that has been further strengthened with the opening of the Maison de la Paix during the year under review.
- Numerous programmes and projects in selected affected countries were supported with financial contributions and the deployment of military and civilian experts tasked with warning the population of the risks, clearing areas and supporting survivors. The conclusion of the Swiss Armed Forces' activities on behalf of the UN mine action programme in Somaliland and Puntland can be judged to have been a success in this respect. Local capacities were built on the ground, enabling the mine action centres in both territories to fulfil their mandate independently.
- Through financial and political support for the GICHD and the provision of training courses at all levels, Switzerland is doing much to help make humanitarian demining efforts more rapid, safe and effective, as well as less costly.