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**Mine Action and effective coordination:  
the United Nations policy**



**United Nations Mine Action Service  
(UNMAS)**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Years of conflict have left millions of scattered and unrecorded landmines in more than fifty countries.<sup>1</sup> Civilians, children as well as adults, are more and more often targets of these sly weapons in times of war, and have become by the thousands victims of their deadly legacy in times of peace. Landmines have removed vast areas of land and resources from productive use. Countries with weak or barely existing social and economic infrastructures are often hardest hit, and within these countries the poor are those who suffer the most and are least able to cope.

2. There is growing awareness within the international community that what has come to be known as the a global landmine crisis has far-reaching consequences and requires a multi-faceted and integrated response. There is also recognition that the United Nations has a key role to play in articulating this response and in providing the necessary support and coordination mechanisms. This role was reaffirmed in the successive resolutions of the UN General Assembly on assistance in mine clearance<sup>2</sup>, as well as in the amended protocol II to the CCW Convention<sup>3</sup> and in the landmark Ottawa Convention.<sup>4</sup>

3. In conformity with the expectations of affected populations, the United Nations has accumulated a great deal of experience in mine action. Programmes have been established in various countries, starting with Afghanistan in 1988 and Cambodia in 1992. In light of this experience and of lessons learnt, this paper was developed to encapsulate the key principles on which UN mine action is based and to clarify roles and responsibilities within the United Nations system.

## II. OBJECTIVES

4. The objectives of the principles developed in this paper are threefold and complementary:
- a. to foster the ability of the United Nations to support, in a coordinated, timely and effective manner, affected countries and populations in responding to the immediate and long-term problems posed by landmines;
  - b. to foster the ability of the United Nations to support and build upon the collective efforts of the international community at large;
  - c. to strengthen the credibility of the United Nations in terms of transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, a landmine will be used in reference to both landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs). A glossary of terms commonly used in the context of mine action is attached as Annex A.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular the most recent resolution, A/RES/52/173, attached as Annex B.

<sup>3</sup> Amended Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-traps and Other Devices<sup>≡</sup>, adopted in Geneva on 3 May 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction, opened for signature in Ottawa on December 3, 1997.

### III. THE NATURE OF MINE ACTION

5. Mine Action refers to all those activities geared towards addressing the problems faced by populations as a result of landmine contamination. It is not so much about mines as it is about people and their interactions with a mine-infested environment. Its aim is not technical - to survey, mark and eradicate landmines - but humanitarian and developmental - to recreate an environment in which people can live safely, in which economic, social and health development can occur free from the constraints imposed by landmine contamination, and in which victims' needs are addressed.

6. A distinction has sometimes been made between operational mine action (i.e. mine action in support of operations mandated by the UN Security Council), humanitarian mine action, and mine action in support of reconstruction and development. The United Nations does not adhere to this distinction, since it does not reflect the fact that there is considerable overlap between the various aspects of a country's recovery (peacekeeping and peace-building, reintegration of refugees and IDPs, revival of communities, reconstruction and development), and that what really matters is the establishment of clear priorities in relation to the needs of the affected populations.

7. Given the importance of an integrated and holistic response to the issue of landmine contamination, and the need to bring real and lasting support to those who are at risk, UN mine action encompasses four complementary core components:

- a. mine awareness and risk reduction education;
- b. minefield survey, mapping, marking, and clearance;
- c. victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration;
- d. advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines and support a total ban on antipersonnel landmines.

In support of these core components, other activities will be key to the success of mine action and mine action programmes, such as: resource mobilization, national/local capacity building and requisite institutional support (including human resource development of local counterparts from both government and civil society), information management (including the conduct of assessment missions, surveys and, more generally, data gathering), training of personnel (in all mine-related responsibilities, including management), and quality management (including setting of standards and programme monitoring and evaluation).

### IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

#### A. Scope and nature of the landmine problem

8. Landmines are first and foremost a humanitarian concern and must be addressed from this perspective. They are also an impediment to rehabilitation and sustainable development. The nature and scope of the landmine problem must be defined in terms of its humanitarian, public health, and socio-economic implications, including, in particular, its impact on lives, livelihoods, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and, more generally, an environment which should be safe and conducive to peace-building, reconstruction, and development.

9. All relevant information on landmine contamination and its humanitarian and socio-economic consequences should be provided to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), through the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators in the field or other partners as appropriate, so that a comprehensive profile of the landmine problem can be developed and early action initiated.

## B. Principles for UN assistance in mine action

10. In dealing with the landmine problem, the United Nations will respect the fundamental humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity so that priority is given to those who are most vulnerable. Training or support for mine action will not, in principle, be provided to the militaries of mine-contaminated countries.

11. The United Nations will take every opportunity to stigmatize the continuing use of landmines and to support a total ban on antipersonnel landmines. In order to receive assistance, relevant parties should be committed to supporting mine action actively, and to desisting from producing, stockpiling, using, and transferring antipersonnel landmines. When applicable, this commitment should form an integral part of peace treaties, cease-fire agreements and peace-building arrangements.

12. Exceptions to the above principle should be based only on humanitarian considerations: humanitarian mine action activities focused on reducing immediate threats to the well-being of affected communities and to the activities of humanitarian workers should not be subjected to conditionalities related to the continuing use of landmines.

## C. The notion of integrated and sustainable mine action

13. The United Nations supports an holistic approach to mine action, addressing its various elements in a complementary manner both at the field level, and at the headquarters level. Mine awareness and risk reduction education, minefield mapping, marking and clearance, victim assistance and rehabilitation, advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines and support for a comprehensive ban, are all integral parts of mine action.

14. This holistic approach requires that appropriate attention be given to the issues of national ownership, sustainability and capacity building. In countries with long-term needs, mine action programmes must be sustainable and should include as a key component the development of a national/local capacity from the outset of mine action activities throughout the development of integrated programmes. A national/local capacity (formed most often under the auspices of a government or local authorities) is characterized by its ability to develop and articulate overall policy and direction, as well as to plan, coordinate, manage, and sustain a programme that is accountable, cost-effective, and able to address the humanitarian and socio-economic implications of landmine contamination.

15. Mine action initiatives must also be an integral component of strategies designed to rehabilitate health care, education, infrastructure, agriculture and marketing systems, to name but a few of the requirements of societies recovering from violent conflicts.

## D. The requirement for effective coordination

16. To ensure effective coordination within the UN system, all mine action activities will be organized in consultation with UNMAS, and with the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators in the field as appropriate.

17. When programmes are initiated in the field, coordination mechanisms should be established to ensure that strategic and forward planning takes place and that country-wide mine action activities are consistently integrated, monitored, and reviewed (including mine awareness in refugee camps in neighbouring countries and mine clearance related to peacekeeping missions, when applicable).

18. As part of these coordination mechanisms, a database should be developed, and a level I survey (followed by a level II survey) should be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity.

19. Donors, NGOs, and other entities concerned with the problem of landmines should be encouraged to coordinate their activities with UNMAS and with the UN and local authorities responsible for mine action in the field.

20. UNMAS will ensure that regular monitoring and lessons learnt missions are conducted, and that insights gained from particular experiences are shared with all interested parties.

E. The initiation and development of mine action programmes in the field

21. Action to address the mine problem must begin as early as possible when there is a recognized need. It should include, in particular, assessments and level I surveys, awareness and risk reduction education, victim assistance, and advocacy to stigmatize the use of landmines.

22. Without prejudice to agencies= existing mandates and accountability, all requests for assistance in mine action should be reviewed in consultation with UNMAS. When justified by the circumstances, and as a first step of a United Nations response, UNMAS should, as soon as it is possible and in consultation with the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, organize a multidisciplinary and multisectoral assessment to define the scope and nature of the problem, to identify constraints and opportunities relating to the development of mine action initiatives, and to make recommendations for a comprehensive response including institutional arrangements for the coordination and implementation of mine action activities.<sup>5</sup>

23. The primary responsibility for taking action against the presence of landmines lies with the concerned state. Thus, in principle, the Government of the affected country should assume overall responsibility for the coordination and management of a national mine action programme. When required, UNDP, in consultation with all stakeholders, including UNMAS, relevant local partners, NGOs, donors and UN entities, should assist in creating sustainable national capacities and in preparing and implementing an overall programme plan.

24. In circumstances where the United Nations has to initiate a programme under its auspices, either because of the requirement to meet urgent humanitarian and operational needs or because of the absence of recognized national authorities, UNMAS will develop the initial programme plan in consultation with all stakeholders, including relevant local partners, NGOs, donors and UN entities. This plan should clearly define objectives, priorities, institutional arrangements and other requirements, including technical and financial support, as well as modalities to undertake specific activities. It should be designed to meet critical urgent needs as well as the long-term requirements essential for the development of a sustainable, national/local capacity, when applicable.

25. When required, transitional arrangements for the provision of UN support to the ongoing development of a sustainable national/local mine action capacity should be identified and clearly defined at the earliest stage to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities. They should be decided on a case-by-case basis but will normally be implemented when the national authority assumes responsibility for the coordination and management of the overall mine action programme originally developed under UN auspices.

26. Whenever practical and in order to facilitate the transition process when it is required, the UN entity responsible for providing logistical, financial, and administrative support to a mine action programme during the initiation phase will continue to be responsible for this support throughout the development of the programme.

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<sup>5</sup> Terms of reference for assessment missions are attached as Annex C.

## F. The requirement for prioritization and accountability

27. All programmes should have well-established mechanisms to set priorities for mine action activities on the basis of need and the most effective use of available resources. While it must be remembered that no two situations are alike, priorities for mine clearance will often include, *inter alia*, the following: provision of emergency assistance; settled land with high civilian casualty rates; land required for the resettlement of refugees/IDPs; land required for agriculture; community development; access to and free operation of health services; reconstruction, and infrastructure development.

28. Programmes should also incorporate clearly-defined accountability mechanisms to ensure that priority needs are met and that there is cost-effective use of available resources. They should involve periodic review exercises in order to determine overall effectiveness in approach, orientation and implementation, and to advise on what changes, if any, need to be introduced.

## V. RESPONSIBILITIES AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

### A. Role and responsibilities of UN partners<sup>6</sup>

#### *United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)*

29. The United Nations Mine Action Service is the focal point within the UN system for all mine-related activities. In this capacity, it is responsible for ensuring an effective, proactive and coordinated UN response to landmine contamination. UNMAS, in consultation with other partners, will establish priorities for assessment missions, facilitate a coherent and constructive dialogue with the donor and international communities on the mine issue, and coordinate the mobilization of resources. It is also responsible for the development, maintenance and promotion of technical and safety standards (a responsibility which will be delegated to UNICEF with regard to mine awareness and to WHO with regard to the public health aspect of victim assistance); for the collection, analysis and dissemination of mine-related information, including information on technology; for advocacy efforts in support of a global ban on antipersonnel landmines; and for the management of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

#### *Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA)*

30. The Department for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with UNMAS and other entities of the Organization, will support the role of the UN Secretary-General in relation to the Ottawa Convention. The Department's specific responsibilities relate to provisions of two articles: Transparency measures (article 7) and AFacilitation and clarification of compliance (article 8).

#### *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*

31. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for sharing all relevant information with UNMAS and other partners regarding the humanitarian implications of landmines. It will work to ensure that humanitarian needs are met as an integral component of the overall humanitarian endeavor. It will advocate for a global ban on antipersonnel landmines and for victim assistance. OCHA will also work closely with UNMAS on resource mobilization in its capacity as manager of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and coordinator of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP).

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<sup>6</sup> The specific role of the various UN partners in relation to resource mobilization is attached as Annex D.

*Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

32. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will ensure that the needs of refugees and other populations of concern to UNHCR are met. In particular, it will work with UNICEF to develop appropriate mine awareness programmes in refugee camps and with WFP for the safe delivery of food.

*United Nations Children=s Fund (UNICEF)*

33. The United Nations Children=s Fund, working in collaboration with UNMAS, is the UN focal point on mine awareness education. In this capacity, it will provide appropriate guidance for all mine awareness programmes, liaising closely with concerned partners such as OCHA, WFP, UNHCR, WHO and UNDP. UNICEF, in collaboration with WHO, ICRC, and other partners where appropriate, will ensure comprehensive rehabilitation of landmine victims, which includes psychosocial counseling, physical rehabilitation (including the provision of prosthetics and orthotics), and education for those with disabilities. Additionally, UNICEF will continue to be an active advocate for the promotion of a total ban on antipersonnel landmines and the ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

34. Within the UN system, the United Nations Development Programme will be responsible for addressing the socio-economic consequences of landmine contamination and for supporting national/local capacity building to ensure the elimination of the obstacle they pose to the resumption of normal economic activity, reconstruction and development. When applicable, UNDP will have primary responsibility for the development of integrated, sustainable national/local mine action programmes in situations where the problem of landmines is not only a humanitarian emergency. It will work closely with UNMAS and share all relevant information.

*United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)*

35. The United Nations Office for Project Services is a principal service provider within the UN system for integrated mine action and capacity building programmes. It will implement mine action programmes as appropriate in collaboration with concerned partners (UNMAS, UNDP and others). As its mandate enables it to work with all UN agencies, UNOPS will be instrumental in providing the continuity of implementation that is required for mine action programmes.

*World Food Programme (WFP)*

36. The World Food Programme is involved in mine action in relation to its mandate to provide food assistance. Its three main areas of concern are: a/ the clearance of access roads for the speedy and cost-effective delivery of food assistance; b/ the clearance of land required for the safe return of displaced populations; and c/ the clearance of crop land for agricultural use in order to promote sustainable levels of local food production.

*Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)*

37. The Food and Agriculture Organization is involved in mine clearance in relation to its humanitarian agriculture relief activities in countries affected by complex emergencies. The definition of criteria for the selection of priority sites requiring mine clearance is a pre-requisite to the formulation of humanitarian relief/short term rehabilitation interventions.

*World Bank (the Bank)*

38. As a development agency the World Bank supports programmes, in member countries, which help lead to the eradication of poverty and to the promotion of sustainable development. Its support of mine action is based upon the recognition that mine pollution is, for many affected countries, a significant obstacle to the reestablishment of normal development activities. In this context, it shares with UNDP a perspective which views mine pollution as a development problem with long term consequences and, necessarily, with long-term solutions which extend far beyond initial humanitarian concerns. Globally, the Bank shares responsibility with UNDP for convening donor groups in reconstruction situations and thus has a major role in resource mobilization and in setting long term agendas for international support for mine action and other needs. It works closely with all UN departments and agencies.<sup>7</sup>

*World Health Organization (WHO)*

39. Within the framework of its mandate as expressed by the 101st session of its Executive Board, the World Health Organization will be responsible for the development of appropriate standards and methodologies, as well as the promotion of health service capacity building for sustainable victim assistance, through the Ministries of Health of affected countries. It will provide public technical health support to the various UN partners involved in mine action, and cooperate closely with UNICEF and ICRC.

B. Contributions of like-minded partners

40. The United Nations welcomes and acknowledges all contributions to mine action made by like-minded partners from both governments and civil society. It recognizes in particular the instrumental role played by the NGO community and the International Committee of the Red Cross in raising public awareness of the landmine issue and addressing the needs of those at risk. In articulating and developing its mine action policy and activities, the United Nations strives to give due consideration to the concerns of all parties.

*Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

41. Humanitarian mine action NGOs are important contributors to the building of indigenous capacities to respond to the consequences of landmines. Experienced humanitarian mine action NGOs have the capacity to effectively transfer skills related to mine awareness education, mine survey and marking, mine clearance, data collection, analysis and programme management. Their contributions to the promotion of safety and quality assurance standards, to developing community-based prioritizing of resource deployment based on humanitarian need, and to raising local and global consciousness of the landmine problem (and its moral implications) render them a valuable source of insight, advice and operational capacity. Often working with affected communities prior to UN involvement in a mine-affected country, NGOs are important partners in the development of policies for and the implementation of integrated, coherent and cost effective mine action programming.<sup>8</sup>

*The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

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<sup>7</sup> A more extensive discussion of the World Bank and Mine Action is attached to this document as Annex E.

<sup>8</sup> Various guidelines and policy documents have been developed by the NGO community on the landmine issue. Two examples are provided as Annex F: 1/. The so-called ABad Honnef Guidelines, originally drafted by the German Campaign to Ban Landmines and subsequently discussed and revised at an international NGO-Symposium in Bad Honnef on 23rd/24th June 1997; 2/. The Statement of Principles jointly issued by Handicap International, Mines Advisory Group and Norwegian People's Aid in Brussels on 21 November 1997.

42. The International Committee of the Red Cross acts to help all victims of war and internal violence and endeavors to ensure implementation of humanitarian rules restricting armed violence. In dealing with the scourge of landmines, the ICRC has encouraged the international community to adopt a public health approach comprising preventive, curative and rehabilitative measures. While these measures include as a key element humanitarian mine clearance, the ICRC's efforts have focused on advocacy, mine-awareness and risk-reduction education, and assistance to landmine victims (first aid, surgery, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration). The ICRC encourages efforts to promote better field cooperation and coordination in order to avoid duplication and waste of human and material resources.<sup>9</sup>

### C. Coordination and liaison groups

43. UNMAS will ensure that the mine issue is addressed as appropriate in the context of existing coordination mechanisms. These mechanisms include: the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (HLWG), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) at the headquarters level; the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and UN country team meetings at the field level. UNMAS will also ensure that all like-minded partners outside the UN system, including Non-Governmental Organizations, the ICRC and other components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, are fully involved.

44. An Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, will support the overall inter-agency coordination of UN mine action initiatives and activities. It will include *inter alia* representatives from DDA, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNOPS, WFP, FAO, the World Bank and WHO.

45. A Steering Committee on Mine Action, chaired by the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, will support the coordination of UN mine action initiatives with those of non-UN partners. In addition to the members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, it will include *inter alia* representatives from ICRC and the ICBL.

## VI. RESOURCES<sup>10</sup>

### A. Overall approach and activities required in support of resource mobilization

46. Transparency, timeliness, accountability and cost effectiveness are the guiding principles behind all resource mobilization efforts in support of mine action throughout the United Nations system.

47. The various UN actors will continue to conduct their own fund raising activities for mine action both in the field and at the headquarters level.<sup>11</sup> However, they will coordinate these activities with UNMAS to ensure that they are coherent and mutually reinforcing. Donor meetings on mine action will be coordinated with UNMAS.

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<sup>9</sup> A more extensive discussion of the ICRC's approach to mine action is attached to this document as Annex G.

<sup>10</sup> The term resources will be used in its generic sense, referring not only to financial contributions, but also to donations in-kind (material, equipment, personnel and services).

<sup>11</sup> The specific resource mobilization rules and procedures applying to the various UN partners is described in Annex H.

48. In order to secure the consistency of UN mine action, and unless exceptional circumstances make it clearly unpractical to do so, new mine-related projects and initiatives, if they are not already part of an ongoing UN programme, will be discussed with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action before being submitted for funding to the international community.

49. UNMAS will initiate regular consultations with all partners involved, through the Steering Committee on Mine Action, to set priorities for mine action with a view to sharing them with the international community.

50. Where specific funds are made available in support of mine action in general, such as in the case of the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP)<sup>12</sup>, UNMAS will coordinate the UN approach and serve as focal point.

51. In situations where country-specific consolidated appeals exist and mine action projects are ongoing or deemed necessary, such projects will be included in the appeals. In its capacity as coordinator of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), OCHA will ensure that UNMAS is consulted.

52. In order to assist donors in determining how best to utilize their resources, UNMAS will prepare each year a comprehensive Aportfolio of mine action projects outlining the resources required for all mine action projects. This document will take into consideration those projects which are already included in country-specific consolidated appeals, as well as those for which similar resource mobilization mechanisms do not exist. It will be utilized in support of donor meetings and pledging conferences.

53. Implementing agencies will ensure that the necessary mechanisms are established in the field to regularly exchange information with the international community and provide them with updates on the status of UN programmes and budget requirements, as well as detailed financial statements of income and expenditures.

54. UNMAS should be provided with the information required to maintain and discuss the portfolio of mine action projects at any given time with members of the international community, as well as an updated financial summary of past and ongoing mine-related operations (including cash contributions, donations in-kind and secondment of personnel).

## B. Support mechanisms

### 1. Financing mechanisms

55. Although the resources raised for mine action are for the most part channelled through the UN system, they may also be channelled through external partners (NGOs for example) if so required for cost-effectiveness purposes.

56. The Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance (VTF) is used primarily to finance:  
a/. the overall coordination of UN mine action; b/. the conduct of assessment missions to monitor the scope of the landmine threat and the programmes established to deal with it; c/. the initiation of new mine action activities and programmes when and where required; d/. the bridging of funding delays in ongoing programmes.

57. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund is designed as a cash-flow mechanism to ensure the rapid and coordinated response of the organizations of the United Nations system to requests for emergency assistance (ST/SGB/251). It can be used only to make advances to UN organizations and

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<sup>12</sup> UNFIP serves as interface with the UN Foundation also known as the Turner Trust Fund.

entities. These advances have to be reimbursed as a first charge against the voluntary contributions received in response to consolidated appeals.

58. For programmes which have to be sustained in the long term, specific trust funds should be established within the financing agency as soon as possible. The objective of these trust funds is to allow for the principles of transparency, accountability and cost effectiveness to be respected.

59. Mine action in support of peacekeeping operations will continue to be financed exclusively by peacekeeping budgets and resources, to the exclusion of resources drawn from the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

60. World Bank resources are primarily provided on the basis of interest free credits (IDA) or loans (IBRD). Resources are provided directly to governments, who own the process and are responsible for execution. Many governments have, to date, chosen to draw upon humanitarian grants for demining. There is, however, significant potential for increased support from the Bank's credits or loans for financing mine action if a/. member governments decide that this use of Bank resources is appropriate and b/. borrower governments require resources for mine action beyond those available from grant sources.

## 2. Monitoring and reporting to donors

61. Implementing agencies in charge of country programmes are responsible for submitting regular progress and financial reports to donors. These reports should take into consideration cash contributions as well as contributions in-kind and secondment of personnel. They should provide sufficient details on the origin of the resources made available and on the expenditures incurred against those resources.

62. On an annual basis, UNMAS will prepare a financial statement related to mine action for distribution to the donor community.