



UNMAS & IRU: an innovative partnership to de-mine Afghanistan and expedite its economic recovery

The International Road Transport Union and the UN Mine Action Service team up to undertake demining activities in Afghanistan as a concrete contribution to the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and Millenium Development Goals.

Kabul - the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) today officially launched their first-of-its kind, innovative public-private partnership aimed at strengthening road safety in Afghanistan by removing landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) along roads linking Kabul to its Central Asian neighbours. By reducing injury and death threat posed to those travelling and working along these routes, the project will, in the long term, contribute to the reconstruction, development and stabilisation of Afghanistan by enhancing domestic and international trade links.

Max Kerley, Director of UNMAS, said the project would "form a crucial part of the Afghan reconstruction effort, supporting the economy by enabling less costly trade between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and beyond, and employing several hundred Afghans in some of the country's most deprived and unstable provinces. Every penny needed for landmine clearance in Afghanistan must be raised voluntarily, and we are delighted that our efforts to partner with non-traditional donors are yielding such positive results."

IRU Secretary General, Martin Marmy, continued, "The IRU is a natural partner of such UN programmes, as strengthening road safety and facilitating trade by road transport have been at the core of IRU's actions over 60 years now. The road transport industry is proud to tangibly contribute once again to the economic recovery of a war-torn country, Afghanistan, after doing the same for Europe some 60 years ago by implementing the UN TIR System. This partnership perfectly embodies the IRU's motto of 'Working Together for a better future'."

This IRU-UNMAS partnership will clear 37 hazards contaminated by mines and ERW in the central, northern and north-eastern regions of Afghanistan, within a two year period. These hazards are located within a 100m corridor on either side of the 700 km ring road which connects Kabul to the provinces in the Northern provinces of Parwan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Samangan, Balkh and Jowzjan.

The 37 hazards covered by this project specifically impact the daily lives of 26 communities, and directly benefit over 3,157 families and provide employment opportunities for 343 people from those affected communities. Safe road transport trade between Afghanistan and its northern neighbouring countries, such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, will also help reduce the cost of food and non-food items, thus bringing an overall national benefit.

This innovative public-private partnership draws on the experience of all stakeholders and will create synergies between key and diverse expertise to ensure the maximum level of efficiency, and safety, as well as ensure the collection and analysis of field information to obtain an as accurate picture as possible of the scope and nature of the threat, thus enabling a fair prioritisation of activities and ensuring that those in most need are helped first.

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