



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**U.S. Statement for the**  
**Forum for Security Cooperation:**  
**Security Dialogue on Humanitarian Mine Action**

As prepared for delivery by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko  
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Thank you, Mr. Chair,

And thank you to our distinguished panel of experts for sharing their insights with us today.

I'd like to first note with some skepticism the complaint voiced at the opening of this session that this agenda item -- Humanitarian Mine Action -- somehow represents "narrow block-based interests." Mr. Chair -- there were no other comments on, or objections to, the agenda, from which we can plainly see that 56 participating States are in favor of having this discussion and only 1 opposes (or has "reservations" about it). I know that we have our disagreements, but I think we can all agree that there is no way for 56 of 57 to be considered "narrow."

This persistent attempt to push a false narrative and disrupt the worthwhile work of this forum simply magnifies the stark isolation of a single participating State.

Mr. Chair,

The United States appreciates Cyprus raising this timely and important issue for discussion. It is clearly significant in light of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. As Russia's expended its offensive equipment after its many failed attempts to seize more of Ukraine's territory, it has returned to the Soviet doctrine of mining as much territory as possible in front of its lines.

In the words of Konstantin Yefremov, a former officer with Russia's 42nd motorized rifle division, who had been stationed in Zaporizhzhia in 2022, "Putin's army is experiencing shortages of various arms, but can literally swim in mines." All Russia needed was the "slave labor" of its thousands of new conscripts to lay them. And as a result, the problem of mine contamination in Ukraine is growing

every day as Russia desperately attempts to hold onto the occupied territory of Ukraine.

Russia's mine contamination of Ukraine will be an unfortunate legacy that will outlast Russia's military presence on Ukraine's soil. And, as we have observed elsewhere in the world, civilians will fall victim to mines long after the military purpose has expired. Furthermore, the risks associated with the presence of these mines and other explosive remnants of war will have indirect, knock-off effects that can limit, isolate, stigmatize, and discriminate against women, girls, boys, and men in different ways.

International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) mitigate some of those effects by providing comprehensive guidelines and standards for all aspects of mine action, from land release to risk education and victim assistance. These standards aim to improve safety, efficiency, and effectiveness in mine action by promoting a common and consistent approach, providing guidance, establishing principles, and, in some cases, defining international requirements and specifications.

Through this framework of standards, national mine action authorities can both develop and improve their national mine action standards. For example, IMAS provides principles for engaging with communities, most notably on Victim Assistance (IMAS 13.10); on explosive ordnance risk education (IMAS 12.10), and on non-technical surveys (IMAS 8.10). These principles all address in detail the best practices for engaging with vulnerable populations.

As a member of the IMAS Review Board, the United States can attest to the rigor used by the representatives from the international community, affected states, regional organizations, and NGOs to evaluate and update the IMAS so that it remains relevant to the evolving needs of the mine action sector. This includes ensuring that diversity, inclusion, and respect for individual rights are incorporated into the guidance IMAS provides to national authorities as they develop their own standards and strategies.

The United States, for its part, ensures that all activities funded with U.S. foreign assistance through the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the State Department's Political-Military Affairs Bureau will meet IMAS and all applicable National Mine Action Standards.

OSCE participating States can include gender and diversity aspects in their humanitarian mine action strategies by adhering to the guidance and principles set out in the IMAS. Given the existence of standards that already work well, we would advise against the development of additional regional guidance. Following the principles and guidance found in IMAS is the best way to ensure that all members of society in the OSCE region can be heard and in their respective nations' processes for developing mine action standards.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.