

Baghdad, 4 April 2012 – Marking the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the United Nations called for an Iraq free of all landmines by 2018, and reaffirmed its commitment to support the country's Mine Action programme.

“Each year on 4 April, countries around the world raise awareness about landmines and progress toward their eradication. In Iraq, we want to honour this day by drawing the attention to Iraqi women, men and children who have lost their lives or limbs, who have become blind, or who cannot move freely because of landmines,” said Martin Kobler, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq.

Iraq is one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world, with landmines and unexploded ordnance covering 1730 square kilometres. Around 1.6 million Iraqis in 1600 communities, or one in every 20 Iraqis, are affected.

Up to 90% of contaminated land is agricultural, with many landmines also found around major oil fields. Families in contaminated areas live in extremely poor conditions with little access to education, food and public services.

In 2008, Iraq signed the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines. Under this convention, Iraq committed to freeing the country of landmines by 2018, and to never again use, produce, acquire, or export anti-personnel mines.

“By joining the Ottawa Convention, Iraq made a great step in the right direction. The Government has embarked on an important Mine Action programme. Much more needs to be done to rid the country from these lethal threats. Today, the United Nations joins Iraqis and Iraqi friends to call for an Iraq free of landmines by 2018,” said SRSG Kobler.

To help Iraq meet its international commitments, the United Nations has been implementing many mine action activities, including by supporting the Government to develop demining and mine risk education strategies; demining; raising the awareness of hundreds of thousands of people about the risk of landmines; and delivering emergency treatment services to survivors of landmine explosions.

“Through mine clearance, millions of Iraqis will have a better life,” said Edward Kallon, Acting UN Resident Coordinator in Iraq. “More farmers will have access to their lands, more jobs will be created and access to quality basic services will improve. Aware of the socio-economic and security significance of mine clearance, the UN Country Team in Iraq remains committed in supporting the Government of Iraq in its efforts to rid Iraq of its mines,” he added.

[Factsheet on the UN's efforts in Mine Action](#)

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