

United Nations  Nations Unies  
MINE ACTION SERVICE  
SERVICE DE LUTTE ANTIMINES

1 March 2012

Dear First Vice Admiral,

I refer to your letter of 15 February 2012 to the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia.

UNMAS confirms that civilian demining organizations have successfully worked in conflict environments for over 20 years. A list of countries in which civilian demining has taken place in a conflict context is attached as annex A. Civilian demining organizations have consistently operated in volatile conditions, taking a neutral and impartial stance. They develop standards and necessary security measures to improve and ensure the safety of their staff and local communities.

Since 1997 UNMAS has monitored the humanitarian Mine Action Sector with the support of other key stakeholders. The work done by these humanitarian organizations has contributed to tens of thousands of lives saved in the well defined framework of international and national standards for humanitarian mine action, in support of and with the support of national authorities.

In conflict situations civilian demining organizations and their international community donors have recognised a humanitarian obligation to assist impacted communities and have taken all reasonable preventive measures to mitigate security challenges when communities request intervention. They cooperate with local authorities to ensure smooth deployment and frequently suspend work in case of any deterioration of the local security situation to a level which imminently endangers the security of staff or the local populace.

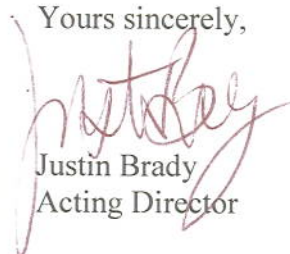
Civilian demining is, in several of these other contexts, complementary to humanitarian military demining. Often civilian operators bring a comparative advantage, in flexibility, as well as in their ability to tap into funding sources which would not be available to militaries. They thus expand the overall programme capacity with unquestionably enhancing the human rights of impacted communities.

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Demining implies a certain level of risk which civilian demining organizations manage as their responsibility. In comparison with the number of civilian deminers deployed in such environments since 20 years, the number of landmines and explosive remnants of war cleared and the amount of land released to the communities, the number of security incidents has been low. Civilian demining organizations have proven to be strong and flexible assets in working in these contexts.

UNMAS recommends the deployment of civilian demining organizations in Colombia under the leadership of the national demining authority to complement other ongoing efforts in rapidly addressing the life-threatening and long term problem affecting local communities, under the leadership of the national demining authority and in full respect of the humanitarian principles in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Justin Brady".

Justin Brady  
Acting Director

cc: Mr. Bruno Morro  
Mr. Daniel Avila Camacho

**Annex A: List of countries in which humanitarian/civilian demining has taken place or is ongoing in the context of internal conflict**

Afghanistan\*  
Angola  
Cambodia  
Chad  
Democratic Republic of Congo\*  
Iraq  
Lebanon  
Libya  
Mozambique  
occupied Palestinian territories  
Sri Lanka  
Somalia\*  
Sudan (including Darfur and Abyei)\*  
Yemen

\* On going conflict.