



4th International Mine Action Conference

“Humanitarian Demining for Urban Recovery: Setting Standards of Excellence for Safe Settlements”

Concept Note

Background:

Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to pose one of the most severe barriers to post-conflict recovery, the safe return of displaced populations, and sustainable urban development worldwide. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, large-scale landmine and ERW contamination affecting approximately 11,667 km² of territory as a result of past conflict has made humanitarian mine action a critical foundation for reconstruction, resettlement, and long-term socio-economic development.

The International Mine Action Conference, hosted annually by the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA), has become a recognized international platform for strategic dialogue, technical exchange, and partnership-building. The 4th International Mine Action Conference will be co-hosted with the United Nations, underscoring the UN’s central role in global mine action governance, the establishment of international standards, and the coordination of humanitarian and development responses in post-conflict settings.

Through the work of UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF, and other UN entities, the United Nations has played a leading role in developing the International Mine Action Standards, supporting national mine action authorities, integrating mine action into recovery and development frameworks, and ensuring the protection of civilians. This cooperation builds on previous successful engagement, including the previous International Mine Action Conferences, which was also co-hosted with the United Nations and its agencies and reinforced Azerbaijan’s commitment to multilateral approaches and UN-led principles in humanitarian mine action.

Azerbaijan’s post-conflict experience reflects challenges faced by a wide range of countries affected by large-scale explosive contamination where landmines and ERW continue to obstruct urban recovery, infrastructure development, agricultural activity, and the safe return of displaced populations. In such contexts, humanitarian demining has become inseparable from national reconstruction and urbanization agendas, requiring coordinated policies, innovative operational approaches, and sustained international cooperation.

Since the end of hostilities, Azerbaijan has achieved tangible progress in clearing contaminated areas and enabling reconstruction in the liberated territories. Mine clearance operations have already facilitated the reconstruction of 12 cities and 142 villages, while creating the necessary conditions for the return of more than 30 thousand former internally displaced persons to their homeland under the Great Return

Program. These results demonstrate in concrete terms how humanitarian demining serves as the foundation for reconstruction, resettlement, and sustainable urban recovery.

Building on the outcomes of the 3rd International Mine Action Conference in 2024, which focused on the environmental impact of landmines and linked mine action to the climate resilience agenda during Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29, the 4th Conference will shift attention to the critical relationship between humanitarian demining and urban recovery. This focus also reflects the evolution of mine action practices, including the increasing use of artificial intelligence–assisted data analysis, drone-based survey and monitoring, digital mapping systems, and advanced mechanical clearance assets, which are reshaping how large-scale contaminated land is safely and efficiently released for reconstruction.

This discussion is particularly timely as Azerbaijan also hosts the World Urban Forum 13, creating meaningful synergies between humanitarian mine action, urban planning, technological innovation, and global discussions on sustainable urbanization. In parallel, Azerbaijan is advancing the establishment of the International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action, envisioned as a future global platform for capacity-building, innovation, and the dissemination of best practices in humanitarian demining and post-conflict recovery.

Aim of the Conference:

The 4th International Mine Action Conference aims to reaffirm that humanitarian demining is the first and indispensable step toward safe reconstruction, resettlement, and urban recovery in post-conflict environments. By aligning mine action with urban planning, infrastructure development, and settlement design, the Conference seeks to move beyond conceptual discussion and contribute to practical, implementable solutions.

The Conference will promote policy-oriented dialogue and support the development of practical recommendations, tools, and operational approaches that enable governments, mine action authorities, and development partners to integrate demining into national urban recovery frameworks. Emphasis will be placed on setting standards of excellence for safe settlements, including the use of data-driven decision-making, innovative technologies, and coordinated planning methodologies that link clearance activities directly with reconstruction timelines and development priorities.

Risks and Challenges:

Despite the progress achieved, humanitarian demining in support of urban recovery continues to face significant risks and challenges. The scale and density of landmine and ERW contamination in areas designated for housing, infrastructure, and public services remain among the most complex obstacles, particularly in urban and peri-urban environments where mixed contamination and population exposure increase operational and safety risks.

Additional challenges include the high financial and technical costs associated with clearance activities that must be synchronized with reconstruction and urban development timelines. Ensuring the safety of civilians, demining personnel, and returning populations requires strict adherence to international standards, continuous quality assurance, and sustained investment in training and equipment. Access to

advanced technologies, specialized machinery, and qualified personnel remains uneven, while funding constraints can slow progress and delay reconstruction.

Effective coordination between humanitarian mine action actors, urban planners, infrastructure developers, local authorities, and development partners also remains a critical challenge. Without integrated planning and data-sharing mechanisms, delays between land clearance and reconstruction can undermine the full socio-economic benefits of mine action. These challenges underscore the need for stronger international cooperation, policy coherence, and innovation.

Expected Outcomes:

In response to these challenges, the Conference is expected to strengthen the international understanding that humanitarian mine action is a precondition for sustainable urban recovery and development. It will enable Azerbaijan to share its experience in linking large-scale mine clearance with the Great Return Program, including the development of smart villages, new towns, and resilient infrastructure in formerly contaminated areas.

Participants will gain concrete insights into how demining enables housing construction, transportation networks, energy projects, and integrated urban planning, while ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced populations. The Conference will also highlight how the application of innovative technologies, including artificial intelligence, unmanned aerial systems, digital land-release tools, and modern mechanical equipment, is improving the efficiency, accuracy, and safety of mine action operations in urban and peri-urban environments.

The future International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action will be presented as a global platform for advancing technical expertise, operational innovation, and cross-regional knowledge exchange. The Conference will conclude with the adoption of a Joint Statement, reaffirming shared commitments to integrating humanitarian demining into urban recovery, settlement planning, and global development and resilience agendas.

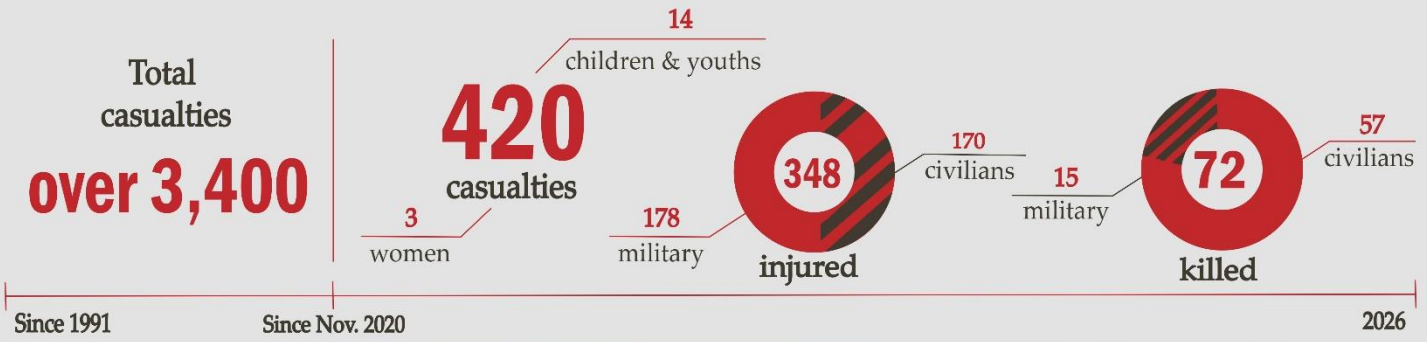
Way Forward:

The outcomes of the 4th International Mine Action Conference will serve as a strategic bridge to the World Urban Forum hosted in Azerbaijan, ensuring that humanitarian demining is recognized not only as a humanitarian obligation but also as a critical driver of urban resilience, settlement planning, and sustainable development.

Through close cooperation with the United Nations and other international partners, Azerbaijan will continue to advocate for the systematic integration of mine action into global urban and development agendas. The future International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action will further support these objectives by serving as a permanent hub for learning, innovation, and the promotion of best practices in humanitarian demining worldwide.



DANGER OF LANDMINE CONTAMINATION IN AZERBAIJAN



246,129
EXPLOSIVE DEVICES
DETECTED

181,487
UXOs

64,642 LANDMINES
DETECTED

- 41,284 APs
- 23,358 ATs

THE RETURN OF
800,000 IDPs
IS IMPEDED BY

30,200 IDPs
RETURNED BACK

EXPENSES FOR DEMINING
SINCE NOVEMBER 2020

\$ 566.6 mln.

BY GOVERNMENT

\$ 24 mln.

THROUGH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

(4.1% of total funds allocated
for demining)

ESTIMATED SCOPE OF LANDMINE
PROBLEM

11,667 km²

CONTAMINATED
(13.4% of total country area)

2,603 km²

CLEARED
(22,3% of total
contaminated area)

More than 1 mln. mines

PLANTED



13 DONOR COUNTRIES SUPPORTING
MINE ACTION IN AZERBAIJAN

11 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SUPPORTING DEMINING IN AZERBAIJAN