



Landmines and other explosive hazards kill or injure thousands of people across the globe every year. Explosive remnants of war block the delivery of humanitarian assistance, prevent children from going to school, stop farmers from working the land, hamper reconstruction efforts and effectively rob people of their livelihoods.

Locating, removing and destroying explosive hazards, which today include landmines, cluster bombs, unexploded ordnance, remnant improvised explosive devices and unsafe and unsecured munitions, saves lives and is a prerequisite for humanitarian action. On 4 April the United Nations marks the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

"I urge all Governments to provide political and financial support to enable mine action work to continue, wherever it is needed", Secretary-General António Guterres says in his video message for the International Mine Awareness Day. "In our turbulent world, mine action is a concrete step towards peace."

[UNMAS](#) , the United Nations Mine Action Service, leads, coordinates and implements all

aspects linked to the mitigation of the threats from mines and explosive remnants of war. They have worked to protect civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarians from the threat of explosive hazards for over 20 years. But mines can also be detected by a far smaller creature than the tools used by humans – namely the Hero Rats. The African giant pouched rats have a highly developed sense of smell and are very quick at finding landmines, but they are too light to detonate them. This makes them a perfect “tool” for speeding up detection and clearance of landmines, and they are nicknamed ‘ [HeroRATs](#) ’ by the Belgian NGO Apopo that trains and deploys them in the field. A rat can clear an area of 200m<sup>2</sup> in an hour, while a human deminer would need 2 weeks to do the same job.

British actor Daniel Craig, the [United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards](#) , also has a message to deliver.

“Let’s find a way of working together, to eradicate this deadly scourge of war and meet our target to be free from these threats by 2025”, he says in his video message for the day. “Let’s eliminate this fear from the daily lives of so many, for good.”