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UNMAS UNSOM/UNTMIS Achievements

2013-2025



Photo: UNMAS



Photo: UNMAS



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Introduction

Since 2009, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has played a key role in reducing explosive hazards in Somalia, supporting efforts to transfer security responsibilities to Somali authorities. As part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and later the United Nations Transitional Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), UNMAS has worked with the African Union and international partners to strengthen national mine action capabilities in Somalia.

This summary highlights UNMAS achievements from June 2013 to June 2025, marking the conclusion of its role within UNTMIS. Over this period, UNMAS provided strategic and technical support to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), bolstered national institutions like the Somali Explosive Management Authority (SEMA), and helped develop frameworks for explosive hazard management. Key contributions included capacity building, enhancing coordination with international partners, supporting compliance with global conventions, and assisting with deadlines for mine clearance and information management. The following sections outline these initiatives and collaborative progress in national mine action as UNMAS transitions its responsibilities.



Female Somali Police Force explosive ordnance disposal team members trained by UNMAS, Mogadishu, 2023. - Photo: UNMAS

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Somali government, the United Nations, and our partners, we've made significant progress in clearing explosive hazards and educating communities on associated risks, as well as strengthening the capacity of the Somali Security Forces who are now playing a vital role in mitigating IED threats across the country. The UN remains firmly committed to supporting Somali-led efforts in building a safer and more stable future free from the dangers posed by these deadly devices.

James Swan,
Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia

Background

UNSOM was established on 3 June 2013 by UN Security Council Resolution 2102, following a comprehensive assessment of the UN in support of the establishment of the FGS. The mandate of UNSOM was subsequently renewed several times by the Security Council. From June 2013 through June 2025, the UNMAS component of UNSOM provided strategic and technical advice and analysis to the FGS to support the establishment of frameworks for explosive ordnance threat reduction and weapons and ammunition management. In this role, UNMAS collaborated closely with UNSOM and, as of 1 November 2024, UNTMIS, to support FGS mine action coordination and advance aspects of security sector reform related to explosive ordnance threat mitigation. Over the past decade, the UNMAS mine action component, integrated within the Rule of Law and Security Institutions Group, played a pivotal role in strengthening communication, information exchange, and the delivery of strategic and technical advice on mine action policy. These contributions supported broader efforts to promote peace, and advance national security priorities in Somalia—laying a foundation for sustained progress in the years ahead.



Explosive Ordnance Risk Education session to Internally Displaced Persons, Lascanood, 2024. - Photo: UNMAS

Support to National Mine Action and Explosive Hazard Management

Under UNSOM, UNMAS offered strategic and policy guidance to SEMA with the aim to enable SEMA to progressively assume responsibility for coordinating, regulating, and managing explosive threat mitigation in Somalia. UNMAS also provided technical expertise to help Somalia meet its obligations under international agreements, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

A key achievement involved strengthening SEMA's position within the government. UNMAS assisted SEMA in establishing an office under the Ministry of Internal Security (MoIS) and, over the years, worked to enhance coordination mechanisms and strengthen SEMA's role as a government agency within the MoIS and Federal Member States (FMS). Through comprehensive training and mentoring in key areas, SEMA gained the skills to independently conduct quality assurance of mine action operations in the field. Additionally, through technical advisory and practical capacity building in information management, SEMA now independently manages the Information Management System for Mine Action and has managed the consolidated database for all mine action partners since 2024. SEMA has also taken on coordination functions, leading quarterly humanitarian mine action meetings and technical working groups, and strengthening ties with international government partners such as Japan, Cambodia, and China.



SEMA Deputy Director and Staff conducting a quality assurance visit with HALO Trust in Lascanood, 2023. - Photo: UNMAS

UNMAS further supported Somalia's efforts to extend its APMBC Article 5 implementation deadline from October 2022 to October 1, 2027, with the goal of achieving a landmine-free status. This was followed by a collaborated effort with SEMA and other international partners to develop and finalize its implementation plan, which emphasizes nationwide technical surveys, explosive ordnance risk education, and capacity development for national mine action institutions. An extension request was recently submitted to the CCM to complete clearance of cluster munitions by March 2030.

UNMAS contributed significantly to victim assistance and disability rights. In collaboration with SEMA and the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, UNMAS developed policies and frameworks, including a National Action Plan for Victim and Disability Assistance. This supported Somalia's commitments under the CRPD, signed in October 2018. In June 2019, UNMAS assisted SEMA in drafting a National Action Plan for Victim/Survivors Assistance in Somalia, outlining the victim assistance process in the country.

Over the years, SEMA has made significant strides in institutional capacity development, most notably through the formulation of key national policies, strategic plans, and technical standards. As a result, SEMA now demonstrates a proven ability to secure, manage, and implement international grants, including bilateral funding from the Embassy of China in Somalia through their Mine Free Africa initiative. To consolidate these gains, continued capacity development efforts supported by international partners such as The HALO Trust and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining remains vital for Somalia to achieve its goal of being mine-free.

On behalf of SEMA, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the UNMAS Somalia Programme for their unwavering collaboration and support since our establishment in 2013. UNMAS has been instrumental in strengthening Somalia's national mine action programme - constructing our headquarters, building staff capacity at both federal and member state levels, facilitating Project Cooperation Agreements, and delivering high-quality mine action training.

At the international level, UNMAS has played a pivotal role in supporting SEMA's engagement, particularly in mobilizing resources and ensuring Somalia's compliance with the APMBC and the CCM, to which Somalia is a proud State Party. We deeply value this partnership, which continues to enhance our national capabilities and drive progress toward a safer Somalia.

Mr. Dahir Abdurahman Abdulle,
Director General, SEMA

Weapons and Ammunition Management

UNMAS, operating within UNSOM, served as the primary technical advisor to national, regional, and international stakeholders on the safety, security, and management of weapons, ammunition, and explosives. UNMAS advised national authorities on establishing a transparent and accountable weapons and ammunition management (WAM) system for Somalia, including developing strategies, action plans, standards, and projects aligned with the United Nations Ammunition Technical Guidelines. At the request of national authorities, UNMAS also conducted field and desk assessments of relevant storage sites to improve the safety and security of ammunition and explosives, aligning with Physical Security and Stockpile Management standards.

UNMAS worked with the Office of National Security (ONS) representatives in founding a National Commission for the Control of Weapons and Ammunition. Furthermore, UNMAS Somalia actively provided advice, training, and monitoring, and engaged in weapons marking, registration, and destruction.



Explosive Hazard Awareness Training to ATMIS troops, Jowhar, 2024. - Photo: UNMAS

UNMAS further assisted the ONS in developing a comprehensive WAM system, especially following the partial lifting of the arms embargo in Somalia. This support included establishing the necessary frameworks, policies, procedures, equipment, and infrastructure for transparent and effective state WAM. As a result, the ONS gained the capacity to mark and register newly imported weapons at the Halane central storage facility inside Aden Abdule International Airport (AAIA). UNMAS also conducted training courses for Somali security forces and facilitated the inspection of, movement and destruction of unserviceable and unsafe weapons to reduce the risk of ammunition stored in AAIA through relocation to alternate storage locations or disposal. UNMAS Somalia also participated in briefing the Security Council Sanction Regime Committee on the outcomes of the technical WAM assessment led by DPPA/SCAD in Somalia which measured progress against indicators set out in the Secretary-General's ten benchmarks guiding the Security Council's review of the Somalia arms embargo, which was subsequently lifted.

Through strategic engagement and relationship building, UNMAS technically assisted in drafting, shaping, and reviewing the National WAM Strategy, ensuring Somalia had a platform consistent with internationally recognized safe WAM standards. Furthermore, UNMAS was instrumental in writing and reviewing all National WAM Standard Operating Procedures.



National WAM Coordination Conference held by the ONS, Mogadishu, June 2025. - Photo: UNMAS

Through its advisory functions and active support to the FGS in linking strategic objectives, legislation, and operational activities, weapons and ammunition are now managed more safely and sustainably. Civilians, particularly in Mogadishu and in FMS capitals, are safer due to an enhanced understanding of physical security and stockpile management. Following detailed and progressive needs assessments, UNMAS mitigated critical technical gaps in WAM, building on strong momentum during a challenging period after the full lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia. The annual National WAM Coordination Conference in Mogadishu highlights the progress in this area and recognizes the positive impact of UNMAS as a partner of Somalia with a common goal.

The collaboration between UNMAS and the FGS has established a robust framework with clearly defined priorities and objectives. UNMAS capacity-building efforts have significantly advanced the FGS's progress toward national WAM ownership, reducing dependency on international assistance while ensuring continued support in critical areas.



An explosive ordnance disposal officer is preparing to destroy an improvised explosive device, Mogadishu, 2019. - Photo: UNMAS

Counter improvised explosive device threat mitigation

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pose a significant security risk in Somalia. To address this risk, UNMAS offered the FGS strategic policy guidance and technical expertise to formulate unified national responses. This support included sharing IED threat analyses, raising awareness about IED implications, drafting legislation, and developing procedures to strengthen state control over potential IED components, aligning with Somalia's previous sanctions regime.

Furthermore, in support of the Somalia Transition Plan, UNMAS concentrated on connecting IED defeat with building the Somali security forces' specialized counter-IED capabilities and boosting the African Union missions' confidence and proficiency in operating against IED threats. This was achieved through a streamlined and coordinated IED threat mitigation support system. To support UNSOM's mission in Somalia, UNMAS aimed to establish a cohesive, suitable, effective, and efficient strategy to counter IED use. Notably, UNMAS collaborated with the FGS in 2019 to develop a national IED threat mitigation strategy. Additionally, UNMAS worked with the ONS to advise on creating national IED threat mitigation plans, which included drafting laws to regulate access to chemicals that can be used as homemade explosive precursors.



A newly qualified trainer or trainers delivering explosive ordnance disposal training to the Somali National Army, Mogadishu, 2024. - Photo: UNMAS

Finally, UNMAS supported the FGS in conducting a comprehensive baseline assessment of the country's counter-IED capabilities using The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research Counter-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool. This collaborative effort culminated in a detailed report ratified by national ministries and organizations on 1 February 2025. The findings provided a critical foundation for the ONS to draft Somalia's first nationally owned Counter-IED Strategy, marking a significant step towards a coordinated and sustainable approach to mitigating the threat of improvised explosive devices.

Coordination

Finally, under the umbrella of UNSOM, UNMAS provided critical coordination support to ensure the effective integration of explosive hazard management into peace and security frameworks. This included delivering high-level technical inputs to key policy documents such as the Secretary-General's reports, strategic communications (including cables), and inter-agency briefings. UNMAS also facilitated coordination among UN entities, national authorities, and international partners to align responses to explosive threats with national priorities and international standards, strengthening the overall coherence and impact of UN peacebuilding efforts in Somalia. These efforts are further supported by UNMAS Headquarters in New York, which provided strategic backstopping, policy guidance, and advocacy within broader UN system processes under UNSOM.



Photo: UNMAS

From l-r, Abdimalik Abdullahi, Director General, ONS; Ambassador Awes Hagi Yusuf Ahmed, National Security Advisor; Fran O'Grady, Chief Mine Action Programme, UNMAS; Mukhtar Jeyte, Deputy ONS.

- Photo: UNMAS

Conclusion

UNMAS has played a pivotal role in supporting Somalia's journey towards safer and more effective explosive ordnance threat mitigation. The achievements to date reflect both the steady progress made possible by close collaboration with the FGS and the adaptability of UNMAS Somalia in responding to evolving security challenges. As Somalia continues to advance in national ownership of these critical areas, UNMAS Somalia remains committed to providing its expertise and support, albeit with a shifting focus under the mandate of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, ensuring that the FGS has the necessary tools and guidance to sustain and build upon these gains in new ways as the partnership evolves.

"As part of UNSOM/UNTMIS over the last decade, UNMAS has been instrumental in advancing Somalia's path to peace and security. Their unwavering support in mine action and national capacity-building has empowered Somali-led solutions. We celebrate their critical role in ensuring a safe and sustainable future for all Somalis."

Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Somalia



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