

Press release**FSD TEMPORARILY MODIFIES ITS MINE ACTION ACTIVITIES IN UKRAINE**

Sloviansk / Geneva, 15 February 2022

Due to the growing tensions in Ukraine, and in order to guarantee the safety of its personnel, FSD (Fondation suisse de déminage) has suspended all its field operations in the country. However, all staff continue to work on tasks from the FSD offices in Sloviansk and Mariupol. Since 2015, FSD has been involved in demining the areas located near the line of contact in the east of the country, as well as raising awareness of the danger of mines among the populations living there. A project to support education in conflict zones is also being carried out there.

Faced with growing instability in Ukraine, FSD has recalled all of its teams deployed in the field to its offices in Sloviansk and Mariupol for the next two weeks. The 53 employees, including around twenty deminers, are working on the activities that this delicate security context allows.

“Some activities have been interrupted, others modified. We are trying to maintain our humanitarian action in the Donbass as much as possible without compromising the safety of our teams, underlines Alex van Roy, Deputy Head of Operations at FSD. We are monitoring the evolving environment on a day-to-day basis and have taken steps to be able to react quickly should the situation worsen. »

The three demining teams, who have been busy fencing off potentially contaminated areas, are using this imposed suspension to refresh their technical knowledge. The awareness teams focus their efforts on online prevention campaigns, in particular via Facebook and Zoom.

“There is currently no question of withdrawing from the country: FSD is familiar with volatile contexts and has the skills and experience to continue its humanitarian action in these conditions, explains Hansjörg Eberle, Director of FSD. We hope to resume all of our activities as soon as the situation allows.»

CONTACT

- Alex van Roy, Deputy Head of Operations (EN):
alex.vanroy@fsd.ch, +41 79 863 77 55
- Olena Kryvova, Deputy Programme Manager in Ukraine (EN):
olena.kryvova@fsd.ch, +38 050 130 23 37
- Alexandra Brutsch, Head of Communications (FR, EN):
alexandra.brutsch@fsd.ch, +41 78 807 45 50

PHOTOS

Photographs on our humanitarian activities in the Donbass can be downloaded here:
<https://we.tl/t-JrX7VglRNI>

FSD

Avenue Giuseppe-Motta 14b
1202 Geneva - Switzerland
+41 22 731 14 79
info@fsd.ch
www.fsd.ch



ABOUT FSD

FSD is a humanitarian organization founded in Geneva in 1997. Our experts destroy landmines and unexploded ordnance, decontaminate sites polluted by toxic waste and support populations affected by armed conflicts and situations of instability.

More information about FSD: <https://fsd.ch/en/>

FSD'S ACTION IN UKRAINE

FSD's involvement in Ukraine dates back to early 2015, a year after a conflict broke out in the Donbass region, de facto dividing this region between a part under the control of separatists and an area under government control. The objective of the FSD project then was to reduce the number of civilian victims as much as possible by teaching the inhabitants to "cohabit" with mines and unexploded ordnance in relative safety.

Today, in order to make more people aware of the risks of mines, FSD also deploys online prevention campaigns through social networks.

In 2017, FSD implemented a demining program to locate and destroy mines and unexploded ordnance. To date, almost 5 million square meters of land have been inspected and cleared and can now be used safely by the population. This has notably enabled the resumption of agricultural activities in these areas.

At the end of 2019, a new project was launched, aimed at strengthening access to education in war zones. By visiting schools and kindergartens during their mine awareness missions, FSD staff witnessed the extent of the destruction inflicted on school infrastructure and the devastating impact of the conflict on the daily lives of children. Following a special appeal for donations, FSD was able to carry out a needs assessment in schools and kindergartens located along the front line and began the rehabilitation of damaged establishments.

In 2021, FSD neutralized 299 unexploded ordnance in Ukraine and decontaminated more than 400,000 square meters of former battlefields.

More information about FSD's action in Ukraine: <https://fsd.ch/en/activities/operations/ukraine/>

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