

Press conference of the Swiss Federal Council

**Statement by Hansjörg Eberle, FSD Director**

*Geneva, September 29, 2023*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Swiss government, in particular the FDFA and the DDPS, for this increased support for humanitarian demining in Ukraine.

As the only Swiss organisation carrying out humanitarian demining operations in the field, we have a responsibility to ensure that our action to protect people affected by mines and explosive remnants of war is effective, reliable and swift. We would like to thank the Federal Council for the trust it has placed in us in this respect.

The Swiss government's increased commitment to humanitarian demining is of crucial importance. Every mine or explosive device removed represents a potential civilian life saved. However, demining has a much wider impact. It also enables the safe deployment of humanitarian aid, the reconstruction of essential infrastructure, the return of displaced people and the resumption of agricultural activities. It is not just a question of removing mines and unexploded ordnance, but of ensuring that certain areas can be safely re-used by the population.

Humanitarian demining is a complex mission, requiring a significant and lasting commitment. Ukraine is currently facing a level of mine and unexploded ordnance contamination unprecedented since the Second World War, both in terms of quantity and diversity of explosive devices. As new regions are liberated, new responsibilities fall to our humanitarian deminers.

Over the last twelve months, our teams have cleared more than 120,000 square metres of land, including agricultural land, vital infrastructure, residential and community areas. We have educated almost 100,000 women, men and children about the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance and how to stay safe in the face of this threat.

The generous support of the Swiss government will enable us to considerably strengthen our impact on the ground, and in particular to increase our staff numbers. FSD currently has more than 200 staff working on this vital mission in Ukraine. We have the capacity to double our staff by 2024, to 400.

This increased Swiss commitment will also enable us to acquire cutting-edge equipment and develop and test more advanced demining technologies. This will improve our efficiency, reduce the risks for our teams and speed up the clearance of contaminated areas.

The Swiss government's increased support goes far beyond numbers and operations. It's about human lives, about whole families being able to return to their homes, rebuild and access

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essential services. It's about children who will be able to go to school without fear, farmers who will once again be able to cultivate their land in peace. It is about humanitarian workers who will be able to access vulnerable populations without putting themselves at risk.

I would like to warmly thank the Swiss government, in particular the FDFA and the DDPS, for their commitment to humanitarian demining in Ukraine. Your generosity strengthens our determination to eliminate this insidious threat and contribute to a safer future for war-affected populations. Thank you.

## **ABOUT FSD**

FSD (Fondation suisse de déminage) has been working for 25 years to protect civilian populations from landmines and explosive remnants of war. Based in Geneva, the organisation currently employs more than 600 people on four continents.

More information on FSD: [www.fsd.ch](http://www.fsd.ch)

More information on FSD's activities in Ukraine:

[www.fsd.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Ukraine-update-092023-EN-3-1.pdf](http://www.fsd.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Ukraine-update-092023-EN-3-1.pdf)

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