

Press release

**4 APRIL 2025 – INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY**

**FSD DIRECTOR: “WE CAN BE OPTIMISTIC:  
OVER 70% OF ACCESSIBLE LAND HAS ALREADY BEEN RELEASED”**

**Embargo: Friday, 4 April 2025, 6 AM**

*Kyiv / Geneva, Wednesday, 2 April 2025*

On this International Mine Awareness Day, FSD (Fondation suisse de déminage) underscores a crucial message. Despite the immense scale of contamination and an uncertain future, one thing remains undeniable: humanitarian demining works. Every day, lives are saved, land is reclaimed, and communities are given a second chance. Mines and unexploded ordnance are removed, allowing families to return home, farmers to cultivate their fields, and children to play safely. Awareness sessions prevent tragic accidents, and thanks to advances in technology and local capacity building, progress is accelerating.

### **Tangible Progress, Immediate Impact**

Since June 2022, FSD and other humanitarian demining organisations have released thousands of hectares in Ukraine, restoring vital land for agriculture, infrastructure, and daily life. To date, FSD has surveyed over 117 square kilometres—equivalent to 16,000 football fields—and cleared 2.5 square kilometres in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Kherson regions. Meanwhile, nearly 400,000 women, men and children have been trained by FSD to spot explosive devices and avoid risky behaviours.

Among the areas cleared by FSD is a school football field in the Kharkiv region. Just months ago, it was littered with hundreds of ordnance fragments. Today, it is fully cleared and ready for its next match—a powerful symbol of resilience and hope for the entire community.

### **Technology and Local Expertise: The Key to Faster Clearance**

FSD’s mission goes beyond clearing mines—it is also investing in accelerating the demining process by strengthening local expertise. In early 2025, FSD initiated a partnership with Ukrainian NGO Ukrainian Center for Humanitarian Protection (UCHP). *“We support them not only in acquiring demining techniques but also in all aspects of governance and project management, enabling them to eventually lead humanitarian demining programmes independently and sustainably,”* explains Alex van Roy, FSD’s Programme Manager for Eastern Ukraine. *“Building local expertise is at the core of our approach. Training local specialists ensures that Ukraine will be able to manage its own demining efforts for years to come.”*

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At the same time, technological innovation is enhancing the speed and efficiency of demining. In response to the crisis in Ukraine, the sector has seen significant advancements, including the innovative use of specialised machines, drones and explosive detection dogs.

This April, FSD will conduct the first field tests of a drone equipped with ground-penetrating radar—a possible breakthrough that has the potential to significantly improve detection accuracy. *“This technology may allow us to locate mines and unexploded ordnance with greater precision, accelerating clearance operations and making Ukraine safer faster,”* says Markus Schindler, FSD’s Strategic Development and Innovation Manager.

### **International Support and Switzerland’s Vital Contribution**

The scale of contamination in Ukraine remains unprecedented: by the end of 2023, approximately 174,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land was suspected of being mined. Of these, only about 45,000 km<sup>2</sup> was accessible for humanitarian demining, while the majority of contaminated areas were located close to front-lines, near the Russian border, or in occupied territories. On this accessible surface, more than 35,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land was released in 2024 through contamination surveys and demining operations. *“Of course, the task ahead is huge and will take many years to complete, but if we look at the progress made on the land currently accessible to humanitarian demining, we can be optimistic”*, says Hansjörg Eberle, FSD’s Director, *“over 70% of it has already been released.”*

These advances are only possible with strong international support. Switzerland, through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Swiss Solidarity, and numerous private donors, plays a key role in sustaining FSD’s operations. *“Swiss support is essential to our mission. It ensures a lasting impact by strengthening local expertise and integrating cutting-edge technology into demining operations,”* emphasises Hansjörg Eberle. *“These innovations not only benefit Ukraine but will also shape demining efforts in other countries struggling with similar threats.”*

### **A Message of Hope**

Despite the ongoing conflict and geopolitical uncertainty, one thing is sure: humanitarian demining is making a difference. Every cleared minefield means a community that can rebuild, a farmer who can cultivate his land, and children who can play without fear.

On this International Mine Awareness Day, FSD reaffirms its commitment to a future where no one has to live under the hidden threat of mines and explosive remnants of war.

### **CONTACT & MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

- Alexandra Brutsch, Head of Communications: [communications@fsd.ch](mailto:communications@fsd.ch), +41 78 807 45 50
- Photos of FSD’s mine action activities in Ukraine: <https://www.swisstransfer.com/d/8e6f5cf1-f7fa-4db4-9ab7-7a63a259744c>

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## **ABOUT FSD**

FSD is a Swiss non-profit humanitarian organisation that has been working since 1997 to create a safer and more sustainable future for communities affected by war and instability. Its core mission is to protect civilians from landmines and explosive remnants of war. Since its founding, FSD has operated in around 30 countries and currently employs nearly 1,000 staff across four continents.

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

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