

# Persian-Language Outreach Programme (POP) Regional Workshop on Operational Efficiency

*18/19/20 May 2014, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran*

Opening remarks delivered by Dr Barbara Haering  
President of the Council of Foundation  
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

I'm honoured to be in Tehran today. Iran situated in the centre of what we call the Middle East always had, has and will have the potential to bridge over from the West to the regions of the East. Visiting the wonderful Golestan Palace yesterday, as well as the lively Iranian Artist's Forum, I realized to what extent this can be of benefit for all of us.

And that's why we are here today. What brings us together is a shared commitment to address legacies of war, to work for a safer and sustainable future of regions and of mankind – and at the same time to witness progress made in mine action.

It is our will to join forces, exchange views, share experience and to discuss solutions in order to improve mine action. Our mission is to end the suffering caused by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining is engaged in mine action since more than fifteen years. As a center of competence supported by many donors as well as by mine affected countries we contribute to improve approaches, methods and tools in mine action and: to share experience made in the field.

Although the level and type of ERW contamination may differ from region to region, there are many comparable challenges and I would like to encourage us to address and discuss them during this three days workshop.

In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of mine action, the Geneva Centre has established a number of regional outreach programmes to facilitate cooperation between countries. The initiative started with the French-language Outreach Programme in 2006; followed by the Arabic-language Outreach Programme in 2012. Based on the successful implementation of these first programmes, the GICHD is looking forward to working with all of you on this third regional programme bringing together Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan. The programme shall facilitate the exchange of information and experience regarding mine action in order to identify and to promote best practices throughout the region. The GICHD will use the experience gained from the first two outreach programmes to support your work .

The programme's first steps were taken in February 2013 with a regional workshop in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The workshop was co-organised by the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the OSCE and UNDP and included participants from all three countries. As a result of this first workshop it was decided to foresee annual workshops to strengthen regional cooperation in mine action. Thus, our event here in Tehran marks the second annual workshop. Every year, the workshop shall focus on a particular theme.

This year, we are looking at 'operational efficiency'. Given the fact that our task is still huge and our resources are limited both, operational effectiveness and efficiency are crucial. Therefore, humanitarian demining has become highly professional. UN's International Mine Action Standards serve as benchmarks.

To conclude, I wish us fruitful discussions during these days. Moreover, you can be assured that the Geneva Centre is ready to continue to accompany this regional cooperation in mine action in the years to come. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Iranian Mine Action Centre IRMAX for its strong commitment and support in making this regional meeting possible.

Thank you for your engagement and for your attention!

Tehran, May 18, 2014