CLEAR LANDMINES TO REBUILD UKRAINE AND FEED THE WORLD, SAYS CHARITY CHIEF

London/Kyiv As global political and business leaders prepare to meet in London for the Ukraine Recovery Conference (Weds 21 – Thurs 22), the internationally renowned British landmine clearance charity The HALO Trust is urging governments and the private sector to join forces in the mission to clear the country of landmines.

HALO is warning that reconstruction efforts depend on removing explosives from up to 30 per cent of Ukraine’s territory, including 1000 km of a densely fortified frontline. This will require a multi-year effort to reverse more than $135bn of damage to infrastructure including housing, transport, energy and prime agriculture land.

Ukraine faces the heaviest landmine contamination the world has seen since the Second World War, according to the UK-based charity. Its teams are clearing landmines from liberated territories across five oblasts, including areas flooded by the Kakhovka dam breach. HALO deminers found over 5000 landmines across Kharkiv and Mykolaiv oblasts in the last eight weeks alone.

James Cowan, CEO of HALO said:
“The HALO Trust is training the largest group of deminers in its history to clear the biggest battlefield in Europe, so that farmers can plant their crops and restore vital grain supplies. Even as the fighting continues, we have mobilised a demining operation run by Ukrainians for Ukrainians, symbolising the spirit of partnership required for the country’s long-term recovery. There are now 800 men and women around the country, clearing anti-tank mines daily from valuable farmland. They come from all walks of life and their courage and determination is remarkable.”

Yulia Svyrydenko, First Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Economy of Ukraine, said:
“The government of Ukraine plans to return over 470,000 hectares of the most valuable agricultural land to productive use within four years. This is a difficult but realistic task. Both government and non-government operators have surveyed more than 120,000 hectares to date. Their coordinated work continues at this very moment. With the support of international partners, we will strengthen the demining capacity of our government institutions. We are grateful for the intentions of reliable partners such as The HALO Trust to strengthen their capabilities in Ukraine because there are even more ambitious goals ahead. Our plan is to survey, clear and return to use most of all potentially contaminated areas within ten years.”

The reconstruction effort aims to rebuild an economy in which Gross Domestic Product shrank by 29.2 per cent in 2022. The agricultural sector has suffered $4.3 bn of estimated damages, reaching nearly 15 per cent of Ukraine’s capital stock. The combined estimated value of livestock loss damages exceeds $136m, and the estimated cost of replacing and repairing the damaged machinery is over $926.1m.

HALO is surveying land in recently liberated areas using methodology it has tried and tested in over 30 countries during its 35-year history and increasing its mechanisation to achieve high rates of clearance. Since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, The HALO Trust has cleared 150 hectares of land and found 10,000 mines and other items of ordnance, protecting lives and livelihoods.

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The knock-on effect of landmines on Ukrainian soil is increasing food insecurity in some of the world’s most vulnerable regions. Ukraine is typically responsible for six per cent of all calories traded on the global market, and along with Russia accounts for a quarter of global wheat and grains exports and 80 per cent of sunflower oil exports.

Cowan concluded:
“HALO is working with the Ukrainian government and a growing coalition of private and public partners. With greater investment we could clear more land faster, helping to meet the Ukrainian government’s ambition to get its crops back on the global market. The Ukraine Recovery Conference must signal the start of an unprecedented effort to restore an industry that feeds the rest of the world.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

For interview requests please email media@halotrust.org or call/WhatsApp Louise Vaughan, Global Head of Media on +44 7984 203075

For estimates of size of contaminated areas in Ukraine, see Demining Ukraine report by Globesec

For impact on GDP and estimation cost of war damage see Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment

For estimated cost of damage to agricultural sector see Draft Ukraine Recovery Plan from the ‘Audit of War Damage’ Working Group

For estimated cost of livestock loss and machinery repair see Ukraine agricultural sector has lost $4.3 billion from war damage

For estimates on loss of sunflower oil industry see One Year On: The Economic Costs and Lessons of the Russo-Ukrainian war