



**Wilton
Park**

**Report:
Preparing for success at the fifth
review conference of the mine ban
treaty WP3381**

24-26 June 2024

In association with
The Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Office, United
Kingdom and the Royal
Government of Cambodia



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From 24-26 June 2024, Wilton Park, in partnership with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Royal Government of Cambodia, hosted a retreat "Preparing for success at the Fifth Review Conference (RevCon) of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC)." The invitation-only event brought together donors, RevCon host Cambodia and other influential stakeholders. It created a safe space for the discussion of key mine actions challenges to assist the development of the next five-year sector action plan – the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan (SRAAP) - that will be endorsed at November's RevCon.

This report summarises the discussions and captures conclusions and recommendations. It is being widely circulated in the hope that it will be useful to the sector as it prepares for the RevCon.

Recommendations

The Oslo Action Plan (OAP) has been an effective guiding framework for mine action under the APMBC. The SRAAP

should retain much of the substance, whilst updating and modifying it where necessary to reflect new best practice and respond to new circumstances.

The following “quick wins” are recommended for inclusion in the SRAAP:

“The SRAAP should retain much of the substance, whilst updating and modifying it where necessary”

- Add language on considering climate and the environment, relating to both the impact of mine action activities and their outcomes.
- Place more emphasis on prioritisation within national strategies and workplans.
- Keep the number of indicators manageable, including by removing duplication.
- Build into the action plan a requirement for robust monitoring and evaluation, with increased emphasis on establishing baseline metrics.
- Strengthen the requirement for annual reporting whilst reducing the reporting burden, for example through specifying minimum reporting requirements (e.g. of a few key performance indicators), using the same indicators for multiple reporting, and creating/simplifying templates.
- Add clarity around how to achieve stronger national ownership/empowerment. Make the establishment of more active national mine action platforms an indicator of success (ten at least), encourage initiatives between affected states, and request stronger donor commitment to capacity building.
- Strengthen language on localisation, through enhanced support for local operators across all aspects of mine action. Use donor agreements with international mine action operators to promote closer partnership working between International NGOs and national NGOs.
- Increase the ambition for development and implementation of innovative funding mechanisms. The

sector should develop clear user guides and share lessons learned. The SRAAP should encourage new pilot projects including appropriate success indicators, and donors should be encouraged to dedicate additional funding to them.

- Move away from language on ‘donor coordination’ to promote ‘partnership working’ which is more inclusive, reflecting importance of donor states, affected states, and other stakeholders working together.
- Place more emphasis on mental health within victim assistance work.
- With deadlines for Article 5 extension requests approaching for several countries, provide a clear explanation of the process to State Parties, and encourage State Parties to engage early in the process.

Further work ahead of the RevCon is recommended on:

“The sector needs a strong, new narrative that foregrounds the positive impact of mine action on individuals and communities, while remaining realistic about the level of completion that is achievable over next 5 years.”

Increased integration of mine action with other relevant sectors. Mine action has an important enabling role, but there is a need to establish the extent to which it can lead broader integration, the mechanisms available to facilitating this, and an appropriate level of ambition. Further conversations are encouraged on how to increase engagement with other sectors, how to break down donor funding silos to deliver more joint working (e.g. through use of innovative finance mechanisms) and how donors and mine action operators can promote integrated working.

Rewarding good practice. There is clear sector interest in increasing incentives for APMBC State Party compliance, including rewarding pro-active national approaches to delivering strategies and plans. Further work is recommended on the following options: donors channelling up to 20% of funding into supporting contaminated states exemplifying good practice; establishing a completion fund (see also

below); rewarding compliance through a Front-Loading model (see also below).

A Completion Fund. Many State parties with Article 5 obligations have relatively small funding needs to reach completion, but struggle to attract funding. There are opportunities for landmine free successes over the next five years. Further work is recommended on whether the establishment of a dedicated completion fund would be an efficient means to help countries get over the line. Establishment of a volunteer stakeholder group is recommended to undertake further work on the concept.

The Front-Loading Model. The “Front-Loading” model is a potential sector game changer, adapting the successful International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm). An International Finance Facility for Mine Action (IFFMA) could deliver increasingly regular annual funding, addressing multiple sector priorities. Recommendation for a “coalition of the willing” working group to develop a detailed proposal, including governance arrangements. This working group could build on previous research and analysis, and on the willingness of those involved in establishing the IFFIM model to advise the mine action sector. Consideration should be given to announcing the working group at the Lausanne Ukraine mine action conference in October, or at the RevCon in November.

Other Innovative Finance Mechanisms. The sector should boost the adoption of smaller national and local scale innovative finance mechanisms such as the Development Impact Bond model. A UNDP feasibility study into innovative finance mechanisms for Ukraine, due in September, will make recommendations. Recommendation for donors, including those who expressed an interest at Wilton Park, to come together in a second “coalition of the willing” to facilitate the establishment of early pilot project(s) in Ukraine.

Establishment of partnerships between national mine action centres/authorities. To help increase national capacity and empowerment, recommendation for national mine action centres/authorities to consider forming a group to meet once or twice a year.

The Mine Action Support Group (MASG). As part of a drive to greater partnership working, recommendation is that the MASG reviews its mandate, building on the work of Italy, the current Chair.

Value for Money. The sector would strengthen its case for donor funding through deploying a more multi-faceted and rigorous approach to showing value for money beyond efficiency (e.g. by also covering effectiveness, equity, and the broader economic impact of mine action). Recommendation is that the sector should develop a stronger value for money narrative and measurement.

Cross cutting themes (gender, diversity and, environment). Greater consideration should be given to how integration of cross cutting themes works in practice, capturing appropriate levels of ambition, and balancing sometimes competing objectives (e.g. speed and cost against environmental impact). Existing cross cutting working groups play a key role in producing best practice guidance and disseminating lessons learned. Recommendation is that the environment working group publishes guidance for donors and operators seeking to include a balanced consideration of environment and climate change impact into their interventions.

Advocacy. Recommendation is that the sector considers establishing a “group of friends” to advocate for the sector and increase understanding within other sectors of its enabling function.

Encourage technological innovation. The sector should develop streamlined but robust processes for assessing the utility of new technologies for the mine action sector, emphasising the importance of early engagement with and trialling by mine action operators. Recommendation to identify ways of fast tracking proven technology.

A new narrative. The sector needs a strong new narrative that foregrounds the positive impact of mine action on individuals and communities, while remaining realistic about the level of completion that is achievable over next 5 years. Recommendation is for further reflection on how this could be captured in a new political declaration accompanying the SRAAP.

“The mine action sector has grappled with numerous challenges since adoption of the OAP.”

The Oslo Action Plan (OAP) State of Play

The OAP, adopted in 2019 at the Fourth Review Conference of the APMBC, has served as a pivotal framework guiding global mine action efforts. It has contributed to considerable progress across the sector.

Examples of progress are exemplified by States Parties’ commitment to the destruction of anti-personnel (AP) mine stockpiles, Sri Lanka meeting its Article 4 obligations in 2021, successful clearance operations, Chile and the United Kingdom meeting their Article 5 obligations in 2020, and the launch of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) programmes by 19 State Parties. Additionally, 13 State Parties have reported initiatives in victim assistance, and international cooperation has been significant, with substantial contributions from top donors.

The mine action sector has grappled with numerous challenges since adoption of the OAP. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted operations globally, while Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to high-levels of contamination from landmines and other explosive ordnance. Conflicts in Sudan, Myanmar and Yemen have added to high levels of global contamination. The growing use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), primarily by non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and explosive ordnance contamination in urban areas further complicate clearance efforts. Annual funding levels are subject to fluctuation and fall short of sector needs.

“The OAP brought an unprecedented level of accountability, emphasising equal responsibility among stakeholders

OAP Achievements

The OAP injected new energy and best practice. A key focus has been the integration of gender perspectives and the recognition of diverse needs within all pillars of mine action covered under the APMBC. This has resulted in broader acknowledgement that different societal groups are affected by contamination in varying ways, ensuring that reporting on the extent to which mine action initiatives are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all affected populations has increased. The OAP has also helped to raise EORE standards, previously an overlooked area. The working groups on gender and EORE that were set up to support the OAP actions, continue to function well. The OAP also identified a need to explore alternative and/or innovative sources of funding, and highlighted the increasing challenge posed by IEDs.

Measuring progress from one RevCon to the next is challenging without a baseline. To address this, the OAP introduced indicators and best practices to provide a framework for assessment. With that, the OAP brought an unprecedented level of accountability, emphasising equal responsibility among stakeholders. The indicators that were introduced in the OAP serve as an operationalisation guide to the APMBC.

“The level and quality of reporting against the action plan needs to be improved”

Challenges

The OAP is a substantive document on which to build. There are, however, areas that should be strengthened in the new SRAAP, to capture new best practice and current sector needs.

The OAP does not adequately consider the environmental impact of mine action. New language is needed on considering the environment and climate change relating to the impact of mine action activities and their outcomes. New guidance is required to advise operators on how to strike an appropriate balance between potentially competing objectives (e.g. speed/cost vs environmental impact).

Engaging more with mine-affected communities and addressing their context-specific needs is crucial. An increased focus on the importance of effective prioritisation would be extremely helpful. Greater priority should be afforded to mental health within victim assistance.

The level and quality of reporting against the action plan needs to be improved. There is also a need to maintain a grip on the number of indicators, removing duplication. Monitoring progress can be particularly challenging, especially when Article 7 transparency reports are missing or incomplete. There is potential to leverage the information generated through actions and indicators in the OAP more effectively.

Monitoring currently relies heavily on self-reporting which can be a weakness in objectively assessing State party needs. OAP Action 18, Indicator 1 may be leveraged for effective third-party monitoring, allowing for gaps in implementation to be identified and addressed. Reporting might be streamlined through increased emphasis on reporting against a few key performance indicators, and by providing more assistance to national authorities to establish baselines.

While the OAP stresses that national ownership is essential, there is often a mismatch between what is expected and what is achievable without external support. The production of templates for effective budgets and planning processes could potentially assist national mine action authorities. More active national coordination platforms are necessary to allocate resources efficiently and support affected states in fulfilling their obligations.

“The sector needs a strong new narrative that foregrounds the positive impact of mine action on individuals and communities”

Defining Success

The strategic narrative around the “mine free 2025” aspiration set at the third RevCon in Maputo in 2014 broadened awareness of mine action as an achievable goal. It was energising at the fourth RevCon in Oslo.

But the mine action sector landscape has evolved since 2014, notably with new and resurgent conflicts in the Middle East, Sahel, and Ukraine. Moreover, there was a risk of unintended consequences (e.g. under-reporting of new contamination) and of perceived ‘failure’ as the deadline drew nearer.

Although several State Parties are close to completing their Article 5 obligations and could finalise implementation within five years, additional contamination from new conflict and the identification of new legacy mined areas demonstrate the need to broaden the measure of success beyond completion.

The sector needs a strong new narrative – ideally around a single theory of change - that foregrounds the positive impact of mine action on individuals and communities. The narrative should include a stronger emphasis on programme outcomes and realism on where completion is achievable in the short to medium term (celebrating individual national successes). It should champion smarter working (e.g. by using evidence and risk-based approaches to reduce the extent of expensive, time-consuming clearance operations). On balance, the Fifth RevCon should not set a new aspiration date for global completion.

“Either the handover between mine action actors and development actors should improve, or there should be a greater focus on joint initiatives involving other sectors”

Mine Action in Context

Mine action directly contributes to 12 of the 17 SDGs and indirectly to others. Action 6 in the OAP also emphasises the need to link mine action with broader development. The sector has developed a triple nexus approach in which mine action is linked to humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding. Despite this framework and examples of successful integrated projects, many participants felt that the mine action sector was not maximising its enabling potential. The sector should review whether it only aims to complete its core or ‘traditional’ tasks, or strategically collaborates with other national and international actors. Either the handover between mine action actors and development actors should improve, or there should be a greater focus on joint initiatives involving other sectors.

To better bridge the divide between mine action and broader development goals, one positive action would be to strengthen and apply more consistently needs analysis, prioritising needs of the local community in project design from the outset. There is a strong alignment with localisation, ensuring that local communities have a leading voice in decision-making. Needs analysis also provides an opportunity

to wrap in considerations of gender and inclusion. Complementary to this approach is developing an early understanding of local, regional, and national development plans, and how mine action can support them. Gaining a national champion increases the chances of success.

Broader engagement between national, international, and multilateral organisations, for example through a national platform should facilitate coordinated approaches and potentially more formal partnership arrangements. Coordination between different actors should not wait until clearance is completed, moving away from a linear understanding of the connection between demining and ‘follow-on’ development initiatives. This work could be underpinned by a robust theory of change to understand mine action’s contribution to broader outcomes, and how to measure impact.

There are obstacles to pursuing a more integrated approach. To be effective it would require drawing on different funding pots, as donors’ budgets often have differing policy objectives and operate in silos. A robust evidence base would be required to encourage new funding profiles. However, collecting data and using it effectively is challenging. More data and reporting on the direct and indirect impact of clearance operations is needed, made accessible to both donor countries and national authorities to share beyond the sector. Such data should include examples of success stories, country-specific progress updates, how the cleared land is used (using the land use categories defined by the sector), the extent to which clearance beneficiaries are reporting improved livelihoods or access to basic services, and the frequency with which affected communities enquire with mine action operators about ‘follow-up’ items such as seeds and fertilisers, which are traditionally beyond the remit of the mine action sector.

Mine action could use data more effectively to demonstrate value for money beyond measures of surveys and clearance efficiency. A more comprehensive approach to demonstrating value for money would help to attract funding to the sector and increase the attractiveness of joint, integrated projects using mine action to measurably enable the delivery of the SDGs.

There are means by which the sector could push for a stronger enabling role, for example by establishing more liaison roles. However, some participants felt there was a risk of the sector diluting its humanitarian message, a particular concern where donors fund mine action through humanitarian budgets. Where donors fund mine action through development budgets there might be more scope for more integrated projects.

There may be different levels of ambition in different contexts, depending upon the extent of national and local capacity and ownership, donor flexibility, and existence of other development actors willing to act in proximity to contaminated land.

“It is arguable that current mechanisms act to direct mine action funding to the immediate crisis, with long term legacy contamination de-prioritised.”

Donor Coordination: Existing Mechanisms and Ideas for Improvement

An early realisation was that ‘donor coordination’ is too narrow a focus, and that ‘partnership working’, particularly in-country, with a wider range of national and international stakeholders, provides better framing.

a. Existing Mechanisms

Two existing mechanisms are proving to be effective means of facilitating partnership working. Japan has been developing a partnership with the Cambodian national mine action authorities since 1998. As Cambodian capacities have strengthened, Japan and Cambodia have started to reach out

to other National Mine Action Authorities so that they can learn from Cambodia's experience. The capacity building mechanism between mine-affected states that Japan is facilitating enhances the range of partnerships available to the sector. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre has established a strong national platform for national and international stakeholder engagement in mine action through strong communication and relationship building, centred around robust, transparent national strategies and plans.

National and international partners should work together to build more effective national platforms along the Lebanese lines. The Sectoral Working Group (SWG) established by Ukraine, co-chaired with Japan, is also seen as a good model for strategic partnership working.

Donors face constraints when bidding for and allocating funding. These internal donor mechanisms affect the effectiveness of mine action on the ground. International NGOs must navigate complex funding landscapes, including different donors drawing from different humanitarian, development, or arms control funding silos. National mine action authorities and partners in country must channel a series of funding decisions made in capitals at different times with different caveats and priorities into coherent national implementation plans. All actors face challenges arising from the lack of certainty around future funding preventing longer-term planning. For some countries, funding inconsistencies deliver an inefficient pathway to completion.

Donors face challenges in striking the optimum balance between ensuring sufficient oversight, monitoring and evaluation, and allowing necessary operational flexibility and adaptability. Current mechanisms may not provide sufficient incentivisation and reward to national mine action authorities showing long term commitment, producing robust plans, and working closely with partners. Several high performing national

authorities struggle to secure sufficient funding fully to implement their plans. It is arguable that current mechanisms act to direct mine action funding to the immediate crisis, with long term legacy contamination de-prioritised.

b. Ideas for Improvement

“Various innovative finance mechanisms potentially offer opportunity for new sources of funding and new ways of integrated and partnership working.”

There is a need to move beyond donor coordination to a partnership model that recognises the need for collaboration beyond funding, including on strategy, prioritisation, and capacity development. Where practicable, the centre of gravity of decision making should be moved towards national and local levels, replicating successful national platforms. This needs to be nuanced with a recognition that not all national authorities are currently able to lead national platforms (only 17 State Parties have costed plans) and not every donor Embassy has the capacity to play an active role in a national platform. A strong emphasis is needed on strategic planning (including exit strategies), and on linking the coordination and allocation of donor funding with national mine action strategies.

More work is needed on the extent to which it is practicable to introduce new ways of partnership working. Donors would likely remain constrained regarding when, where and for how long they committed traditional donor funding. On the other hand, various innovative finance mechanisms potentially offer opportunity for new sources of funding and new ways of integrated and partnership working, including with the private sector and new donors. A front-loading facility could provide more stable and predictable funding at scale, for both completion and new emergencies, based on longer-term donor pledges. An International Facility for Mine Action (IFMA) could be created for the mine action sector, drawing on the successful international Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm). To take this forward would require the establishment of a donor “coalition of the willing” work group to work through the details.

There is potential to strengthen existing mechanisms. One option to explore further is whether the Mine Action Support Group (MASG) could become more proactive in facilitating coordination and partnership working, or whether it might take on more of an advocacy role, for instance by generating a “group of friends” for the sector. The MASG has an important unique selling point as a forum where all donors can engage each other. Also worthy of further consideration is whether the mandates for UN peace operations should be broadened to cover more mine action interventions.

New crises, such as Gaza, provide a test of the sector’s ability to establish effective coordination mechanisms.

In-depth Topics

a. Innovation and Technology

“There is no ‘silver bullet’, but there are areas where mine action could benefit further from new ideas, technologies, and methodologies.”

A criticism sometimes levelled at the sector is that it is too conservative in its approach to bringing in new ideas, technologies, and methodologies. The scale of the challenge in Ukraine is encouraging new thinking, for instance on a risk-based approach to reduction and cancellation, and on greater use of drones and AI for survey and digitisation to improve information management. There are areas of successful sector innovation, such as PPE designed specifically for women, first responder training, and new ways of disseminating risk education messages (e.g. use of telephones, social media, and murals). The COVID crisis led to greater use of local organisations, able to go to communities to deliver risk education messages where internationals could not.

There is no ‘silver bullet’, but there are areas where mine action could benefit further from new ideas, technologies, and methodologies. These include:

- Looking to benefit more from military innovation through enhanced military to civilian dialogue
- Developing Virtual Reality for training, exploring the potential utility of advancements in other sectors (e.g. in disaster management)
- Enhanced partnerships with academic institutions, applying the land release methodology universally
- Better use of qualitative data, creation of a platform for information sharing
- Greater emphasis on low-cost solutions.

The smaller operators in this sector will be wary of cost when considering adoption of new technology. Sharing expensive equipment or renting it where fields are smaller could be an efficient solution.

A willingness to innovate should be underpinned by a robust assessment of the risks of new and unproven technology. GICHD could enhance its role in testing and validating new technology and confirming the applicability of proven equipment in a different context, supporting the expediting of proof of concept and national accreditation. Innovators should work closely with mine action operators at all stages of the innovation cycle. From the outset, innovators should confirm with mine action operators that they have identified a real problem that is amenable to a new solution.

b. Alternative/innovative Funding Models

Traditional donor funding will not be sufficient to deliver sector aspirations over the next five years and beyond. The benefits of alternative/innovative funding methods include increasing the pace of work by introducing new funding sources or enabling faster disbursement of funds, mitigating the risks and impacts of instability and funding gaps in mine action programmes, and supporting more outcome-driven funding opportunities. These methods also promote nationally led

funding decisions informed by affected states and diversify funding streams.

Alternative financing methods already in use or in development include nationally led campaigns, such as Lebanon's public-private partnership with a credit card company and national bank, and Cambodia's private fundraising campaign. These models have the potential to be scaled up, replicated, or further developed.

Public-private partnerships and private sector campaigns could be replicated in other countries or scaled regionally or globally. Development Impact Bonds, while unlikely to scale beyond tens of millions of dollars or become multi-country, had been helpful for incentivising additional outcomes and could be replicated in other countries and contexts.

Frontloading is in its early stages of development, but strong political will from affected states like Ukraine is helping to build momentum around it. The model's success will depend on commitment from a few key donors to get started.

While acknowledging the risks associated with all innovative financing mechanisms, it is essential that they complement rather than detract from traditional bilateral funding. Innovative finance models provide a way for donors and investors alike to use funds more effectively and attract new sources of money to benefit mine-affected communities.

Some capacity and knowledge gaps on innovative finance exist within the mine action sector. This offers an opportunity to share good practices, experiences, knowledge, and success stories from outside the sector. Hence, goals for the Siem Reap Ankor Action Plan could include taking concrete steps forward, increasing engagement, and continuing efforts to build and refine funding models within the sector. Three key recommendations may be considered:

- Producing a simple and clear guide to models and success stories within the sector and from other sectors. This could serve as a user guide for operators, donors, and National Mine Action Authorities.
- Strengthening advocacy efforts among states to pursue a frontloading model.
- Proposing a Working Paper at the 2nd Preparatory Conference in September, outlining actionable steps for the Action Plan linked to concrete measures of success over the next five years.

c. Comprehensive Responses

It is difficult for the sector to respond simultaneously to emerging crises such as Gaza, protracted situations including Ukraine, and sustain a drive for legacy tasks, including countries close to completion. This dual demand highlights the sector's limitations and the need for new mechanisms to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The meaning of 'completion' in a mine action context is ambiguous given the potential for subsequent discovery of 'residual contamination,' previously unknown contamination identified following a declaration of mine free status. 'Impact free' has advantages as an alternative description of the desired end state, though this is also open to challenge given that contaminated land that is considered low impact today, may become high impact tomorrow following population movement.

A dedicated completion fund has been proposed as a potentially effective new mechanism for channelling funding to countries approaching mine free status and providing an incentive for accession to the APMBC. It might encourage donors collectively to provide more continuity of funding at a time when countries find it hardest to attract it from donors

individually. The voluntary trust fund established to support national implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a possible model. However, the ATT fund is small, and governance (including prioritisation and allocation of funds) and capacity to run a completion fund could present additional issues. Some donors would struggle to justify transferring funds into a completion fund if the humanitarian and development need were not compelling. Further work through a volunteer stakeholder group would be needed to further develop the concept and determine its feasibility.

d. National Ownership and Localisation

The key components of national ownership are agency, control, and decision-making. The sector has made progress towards empowering national ownership, particularly in technical development. However, there is scope to go further in developing and executing national strategies and fostering cooperation between mine-affected states.

Localisation - increasing support and space for local operators, recognising they are best positioned to understand and address local challenges - is widely recognised in the broader humanitarian sector, but is less prevalent in demining. The sector has been more successful in supporting local operators to deliver risk education and victim assistance. Several factors limit localisation in demining, including historical dependence on international organisations for expertise and funding, and high startup costs.

It is challenging for local operators successfully to bid for international donor funding, given stringent governance and due diligence requirements, complex bidding processes, and the preference of some donors to award multi-country contracts. It is though important to support localisation within all mine action pillars, including through investing in a residual local capacity for when the international community moves on. In the short term, donors could encourage localisation through

requiring international NGOs to work in closer partnership with local organisations to enable knowledge transfer so that, in time, local organisations are in a stronger position to bid directly for donor funding.

Supporting the SRAAP

The following three themes were identified as overarching conclusions. More specific recommendations are captured at the front of this Report:

- The OAP has proven to be a robust framework over the past five years. It serves as a solid foundation for progress, and the SRAAP should reflect its evolution rather than revolution.
- The focus should be on actions that drive forward national ownership, partnership working, localisation, innovative finance mechanisms, and cross cutting themes (including environment and climate change considerations).
- Tools to assist include increased compliance on qualitative and quantitative reporting supported by simple templates and strategic approaches for reporting to not over-burden national authorities, a sector theory of change, and national platforms.

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