



**Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 8 - 9 June 2017**

**STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
ON COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE**

Thank you Mr./Ms. President/Coordinator.

The 14th International Symposium “Mine Action 2017”, the annual international gathering of mine action experts, was held under the high patronage of the Croatian Parliament Speaker from 25th to 27th April 2017. The Symposium drew attendance of 150 participants from 30 countries, representing ministries, state institutions, international organizations, equipment producers, academia and civil society. On the margins of the 14th Symposium, a traditional meeting of the South East Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC) was held.

Within four panels during plenary sessions experts discussed the following topics: twenty years of the Ottawa Convention – challenges and achievements; non-technical and technical survey; IEDs – experiences and methods of approach; new technologies in mine action.

For the second time, the role of partner country was introduced – Columbia (a country with mine/ERW problem and a recipient country) and Norway (donor country; for number of years among the Top 5 donors in mine action globally). Added value of this concept is the fact that Norway (with the USA) is the initiator of the Global Demining Initiative (GDI) for Colombia. Croatia, on the other hand, as a host is perceived in the role of a „bridge“ between donor and recipient countries because of its dual experience (from 2011, according to the OECD indexation, Croatia is a donor country). Against this backdrop, a parallel workshop was held, which included representatives of Croatian mine action system and MFEA, National Centre against Explosive Devices and Mines (CENAM) of Colombia and Norwegian Ambassador to Croatia.

The Symposium provided an overview of the latest scientific and practical achievements and offered sustainable solutions in dealing with mines, cluster munitions, IEDs and ERW in general. Thus, joint Workshop of the International Advanced Robotic Program (IARP) and International CBRNE Institute (ICI) was also held, with the topic of C-IED and C-CBRN EOD Action. As in previous years, participants used this opportunity to share their experiences, both technological and managerial.

Participants also greatly valued a field demonstration at the technical survey site which included demonstration of the status and analysis of suspected hazardous area; technical survey preparation and implementation (organization, protective measures, methods, key personnel); demonstration of expected outputs; introduction to new and emerging technologies in mine action; presentation of equipment, machines and devices.

Finally, the Cooperation Agreement between Croatian Centre for Testing, Development and Training Ltd. (CTDT) and International CBRNE Institute (ICI) was signed, through which the parties commit themselves to mutual support and exchange of knowledge, as well as to defining plans and activities for future cooperation.

Thank you.



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**ANNEX TO THE STATEMENT OF
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Project “Demining and socio-economic integration”

On 30th June 2015 Swiss and Croatian officials signed the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on implementing the Swiss-Croatian cooperation program aimed at the reduction of economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union.¹ (The program sees for a grant to Croatia in the amount of 45m CHF for projects implemented in the period between 2016 and 2024.)

The Swiss – Croatian Cooperation Program will support activities which will directly contribute to the betterment of Croatian citizens through a number of projects, including the one which is particularly important for us, “Demining and socio-economic integration”, consisting of demining of a protected forest area and the socio-economic empowerment and reintegration of mine/UXO survivors. For these purposes, a grant of 3.5m CHF has been provided to the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) and the Government Office for Mine Action (GOMA). CROMAC serves as the Executing Agency while GOMA is the Intermediate Body of the Project. At the ceremony held on May 30th 2017, Croatian Minister of Regional Development and EU funds (Gabrijela Žalac) and Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Croatia (Stefan Estermann) signed the contract, thus officially marking the start of implementation of the project activities. It is also important to note how the budget of the project will be divided - 80% for the demining activities and 20% for the socio-economic programs.

¹ The Swiss Confederation established on 26 June 2006 a cooperation program “The Swiss Contribution to the EU Enlargement”. The mechanism has so far been used by twelve new EU Member States and Croatia became the 13th country to formally participate in the program that aims at reducing the social and economic disparities in the EU.

Contribution of this project will be two folded. First, security conditions for people living in the designated county will be ensured through mine clearance in the parts of heavily-mined forest, which in turn would serve as a precondition for economic development of this area. Second, demining will be followed by implementation of concrete measures for survivors and PwD in general.

The overall goal of this project is to achieve a safe and secure environment for the local population with increased economic opportunities in terms of land use and individual socio-economic empowerment, better coordination between different institutions responsible for care for survivors and enhanced capability of actions and resources planning for survivors.

Finally, we would like to use this opportunity to once again, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, thank the Government of the Swiss Confederation, for its strong and concrete support to mine action efforts in Croatia which will certainly contribute to the strengthening of institutional partnerships between the two countries.