

Distinguished Co-Chairs, esteemed colleagues,

In this presentation we decided to follow, to a large extent, and answer, as comprehensively as possible, the questions posed by the Co-Chairs of the Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies to the States Parties in the process of fulfilling Article 5 obligation that were send out in the letter of 20 February 2006.

The task of the Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC), which was established in 1998 as a national mine action authority, is to organize, oversee and coordinate all aspects of mine clearance, mine risk education and mine action technologies. To do this, it relies on 150 employees, 60 of whom are employed in the CROMAC headquarters in Sisak, while the rest of employees, 90 of them, are distributed among the three regional offices, which are located in Osijek, Karlovac and Zadar. In this way, all 12 of the mined counties in Croatia are covered operationally, enhancing mine action efficiency. Within CROMAC there are three sectors: 1. Sector for Operations, 2. Sector for Planning, Analysis and Finances and 3. Logistics Sector; and two departments: 1. Quality Assurance and Quality Control Department and 2. Informational Technology Department.

The National Mine Action Program was passed in the Croatian Parliament in October 2000, with Annual Demining Plan proposals drawn up and submitted to the Government for approval. In 2005 the National Mine Action Program was revised to reflect a new awareness that adequate financing was the new main precondition/stumbling block to fulfilling the obligation of the Ottawa Convention – i. e. to demine Croatia by the 2009 Convention deadline. According to the new Humanitarian Demining Law that entered into force on January 5, 2006, the three-year Demining Plan has been established. According to the 2006 Annual Demining Plan 28 km² is to be returned either through technical survey or through mine clearance; of this 5.66 km² has been returned thus far, and 7.5 km² is being worked on.

Activities to define mine suspected areas which began at the end of 2003, have intensified in 2004 and continued in 2005, as one of CROMAC' s regular tasks. Procedures applied during the general survey, i. e. defining mine suspected area (MSA), were conducted based on Standard Operating Procedures that are harmonized with international standards. The result of these activities has been the identification and location of 1 147 km² MSAs, including 121 towns and municipalities in 12 counties (out of total number of 21 counties). Demining and surveying activities in the Republic of Croatia are fully organized according to market principles and currently conducted by 28 commercial companies and one NGO - «Norwegian People's Aid» - with the total capacities of 609 deminers, 54 demining machines and 133 mine detection dogs. Regarding the nature of the mine suspected territory, it is noticeable that the largest part is composed of forested areas, followed by agricultural land and meadows and pastures. The mine suspected area was marked with some 9 500 mine danger signs, of which some 1/3 are "missing" and in the process of being replaced, having been taken by irresponsible people or destroyed by the elements. All counties, municipalities and towns should be familiar with the position of MSAs, its borders and the number of warning signs, since they have been given maps for their regions and provided with presentation on the issue. In this way, conditions for better cooperation between CROMAC and the counties, municipalities and towns have been met, especially regarding the marking of MSAs.

Since 1998, when Croatian Mine Action Centre was established, 210 km² has been handed over to community for safe usage, either as a result of technical survey of MSAs which determined that the territory was mine-free, or as a result of demining mine-infested territory. Thus far, approximately, some 295 million euros was spent with some 50% of it coming from the state budget, 25% from public and state own companies, 20% from donors and 4% from World Bank loans. Of the total amount spent for demining in Croatia, some 40 million Euros was spent in 2005. Given that as of January 2006, 1 147 km² was still MSA, and that 2006

Annual Demining Plan calls for the return to use of 28 km², it is quite evident that Croatia's likelihood of meeting the 2009 Convention deadline for demining is, indeed, very, very slim.

CROMAC has estimated that of the 1147 of MSAs, some 28%, or 320 km², deserves priority. These areas are comprised of houses and yards, agricultural areas, infrastructural objects, meadows and pastures, i.e. areas used by people in their every day life and activities. CROMAC's prime goal is to complete mine clearance of all registered mine fields, as well as those found during the survey, and to entirely remove all mine threat from houses and infrastructure, reconstruction sites, agricultural areas, meadows and pasture land. The first imperative is to remove mine danger from populated areas and areas planned for economic development, tourism, nature preservation and transport. The remaining 800 km² of mine suspected land consists of forested areas in mountains and hills that have low economic value and that are not as important in either reconstruction or development.

Since the technical and human capacities for mine action, as mentioned before, are well developed in quality and quantity, the financing of the demining activities is clearly the main precondition for fulfillment of Croatia's obligations regarding Ottawa Treaty. Thus, if the Croatian objective and its Ottawa Treaty obligation of a mine-free Croatia is to be achieved, there must be *a political will*. This political will must exist both domestically and in the international community and it must be backed by *economic support* from the Croatian budget and public and private Croatian sources, as well as from the international community - that is international donor support. With that in mind, we fear that resignation and apathy, couched as "realism", may become the major threat to the demining process in our country.