

STATEMENT OF CROATIA  
FOURTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, allow me on behalf of my delegation to warmly congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties. Your demonstrated dedication to the cause of a mine free world, especially in the framework of this Convention, has been well appreciated by my delegation. You can expect our full cooperation in the days to come. Also, our congratulations go to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. President,

We find ourselves in a markedly different situation than that of 12 months ago. Then the attention of the world was focused on the aftermath of the cowardly terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States. Today, in this forum, we once again refocus our attention on that type of terrorism that, albeit acting more slowly, claims thousands of victims every year. Any country that is faced with having to deal first hand with the scourge of anti-personnel mines will confirm my words; anti-personnel mines cannot any longer be considered as a legitimate means for guarding national security. All we need do is talk to the landmine survivors gathered at this meeting to see the necessity of this claim.

The Ottawa Convention has gone a long way towards bringing the goal of a mine free world just that bit closer to reality. It has opened a forum for discussion among states, forced us to make concrete and legally binding actions to destroy all anti-personnel mines, as well as given us a place to exchange information, expertise and, in some cases, provide much needed assistance.

We are once again pleased to note that the intersessional work program of the four Standing Committees has been dynamic and has succeeded in identifying and in many ways addressing those areas of most interest to delegations. My delegation has played its part. Let me take this opportunity to thank our friends from the Australian delegation for their steadfast cooperation and common efforts in implementing the duties of Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction. We hope that these efforts will aid the incoming Co-Chairs from Romania and Switzerland at this critical time when the first deadlines under Article 4 are fast approaching. We wish them every success in this task.

Croatia would like to add its support to the work of the informal working mechanisms of the intersessional process, especially the universalization contact group, the informal discussions led by Canada on how to streamline the possible operationalization of Article 8 (on compliance measures), as well as the new informal contact group set up by Australia and Croatia on identifying ways to assist countries that may have problems with fulfilling their Article 4 obligations. On universalization, Croatia would once again like to call upon its fellow European countries non-States Parties to the Convention, especially the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to accede to the Convention without delay.

On a more personnel note, our appreciation goes out to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and its manager, Mr. Kerry Brinkert, for helping to enhance the effectiveness of the intersessional work process. I believe that we can all agree that

the ISU has proven its worth and my delegation especially would support its continued role in this regard, as was foreseen in the Final Report of the Third Meeting of States Parties in Managua. Croatia also believes that the time may be ripe for an increase in the staffing of the ISU, as its duties will probably only get more demanding in the future, rather than the other way around.

Mr. President,

Croatia is about to take an important step in fulfilling one of its obligations towards the Convention. On October 23 this year, at a ceremony that will take place at a military testing range near the town of Knin, in central Croatia, we will complete the destruction of our remaining stockpiled anti-personnel mines in line with Article 4 of the Convention. Even though my delegation has made similar overtures in the past, in line with our policy of transparency in this matter I would like to once again invite all those who do so wish to come and witness this event.

Moreover, as part of our efforts under Article 6 of the Convention (International Cooperation), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, in cooperation with the Croatian Mine Action Center and the "Croatia Without Mines" Foundation has decided to host a Seminar on Humanitarian Mine Action: Progress under the Mine Ban Treaties. This Seminar will take place in the Croatian city of Dubrovnik, immediately following the stockpile destruction event, on 24-25 October 2002. The Seminar is primarily foreseen as a regional exercise, but all interested delegations are most welcome. Extra information packages are available at our desk.

Mr. President,

As was extrapolated at the last intersessional meeting on victim assistance in May this year, we believe that the work of the Regional Center for Psycho-Social Rehabilitation of Landmine Victims, which is situated in the Croatian coastal town of Rovinj, will by June of next year be operating on a full time basis. It is our hope that Croatia can not only through Centers like this but also through a broader role in the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance further the needs of all landmine victims.

Croatia is also working steadily on implementing its National Mine Action Program. Taking into account the admirable work of our deminers in the past year, and following the completion of recent surveys of suspected mined areas, we can with a fair amount of certainty state that there is about 270 square kilometers of national territory that is known to be mined, mainly along the former lines of demarcation, while 1,700 square kilometers of national territory is still marked as suspected to be mined. The Croatian Mine Action Center is continuously working at resolving the issue of suspected mined areas, although their job is made all the more difficult because many of the mined areas were not recorded by the various Serb military and paramilitary forces that operated on our territory during the homeland war of 1991-1995.

Croatia understands the necessity to have mined areas cleared as soon as possible, which is why substantial financial resources are allocated by the Croatian Government to this Program annually. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority – some 86% – of the National Mine Action Program is financed indigenously, we once again take this opportunity to thank all donor countries for their generous contributions throughout the past year. Any and all assistance is most welcome.

Thank you, Mr. President.