

**Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition  
of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel  
Mines and on their Destruction Bangkok, Kingdom of Thailand  
16. September 2003.**

**A D D R E S S**

**by Mr. Darko Vidović, Head of Delegation  
of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen*

First, let me, on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to extend warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of Presidency of the Fifth Meeting of the State Parties of the Mine Ban Convention.

Secondly, I would like to thank the Government of Belgium and particularly to Ambassador Jean Lint for all the effort he made, and dedication and leadership he has shown during past year.

*Mr. President,*

Today, almost eight years after the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still facing the problem of heavy mine contamination. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMIC) database includes 18,600 minefield records. The latest analyses show that the size of suspected areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at least 4 % of the country's total area. These suspected areas are to be found mostly between the former lines of confrontation, whose total length is over 18,000 km.

Since 1996 to date, around 40 km<sup>2</sup> have been cleared in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The annual level of mine clearance in Bosnia and Herzegovina ranges from 5.5 to 7 km<sup>2</sup>. The number of mine victims is on a slow decline and over the last few years, in average, 6 new cases of mine related accidents per month.

The adoption of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Demining Law in February 2002 encouraged a transformation of the overall mine action system. By the end of 2002, the previous rather complex structure was integrated into a single BHMIC.

Among other responsibilities, the Mine Action Centre has the authority over general survey, through which technical tasks are identified. The current available survey teams have enabled BHMIC to perform general surveys on an area of approximately 100-120 km<sup>2</sup> per year. During last year, the total suspected area was reduced by 55,6 km<sup>2</sup>.

The area was returned for use by population and economic entities. The BHMAC survey teams carried out most of the reduction, which amounts to 90 % of the total reduced suspected area. In accordance with the Demining Law, the BHMAC also has sole responsibility to perform the monitoring of Quality Assurance, which is done by BHMAC inspection teams.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a total of 36 demining organisations are accredited, six of which are governmental, 16 commercial and 14 non-governmental organisations. It is estimated that available capacities of accredited demining organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina could allow for the demining of up to 30 km<sup>2</sup> per year if only followed by appropriate financing.

Also, a significant number of organisations deal with mine risk education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. International Red Cross, UNICEF, UNDP, International and national non-governmental and humanitarian organisations, entity and cantonal education ministries, Entity Red Cross organisations, accredited demining organisations, SFOR troops, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre are all, to the certain level, dealing with the mine risk education. The intention exists to include the Civilian Protection, entity armies, and local police in mine risk education activities. In this regard most has been done in the training of local policemen as mine awareness instructors.

Handicap International is currently conducting a mine impact survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project includes a mine impact survey in 2,600 communities, out of the total of 6,200 communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. BHMAC has launched a pilot project called Assessment and Task Planning in 15 highly vulnerable communities. An integrated mine action plan will be produced for each of these communities, and the ultimate objective is to develop a new priority-setting model.

This year BHMAC has harmonised local standards with International Mine Action Standards. BHMAC Standard Operating Procedures have been adopted that regulate quality assurance in a new way and, among other things, introduce random sampling of cleared areas and the assessment of the level of confidence in the quality of work of a demining organisation.

*Mr. President,*

In April 2003, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Bosnia and Herzegovina Demining Strategy for the Period 2002-2010. Prior to this, the Demining Commission and the Donor Board supporting mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina had approved the Strategy. This strategy is built on the 2001-2005 United Nations mine action strategy; Bosnia and Herzegovina Demining Law; the obligations assumed under the Ottawa Convention; International Mine Action Standards; available data on the mine situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; available mine action capacities; and past practice.

The strategy proceeds from the vision that it is necessary "to ensure a continued, stable, and long-term conduct of humanitarian demining operations and other mine action in order to remove all mines and unexploded ordnance in Bosnia and Herzegovina." This vision follows the nature of the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has the capacities to accomplish this mission. These activities would be accompanied by intensive mine awareness activities as a form of risk reduction education and by activities of collecting and destroying unexploded ordnance and explosive which some citizens still have in their possession.

The starting point in the drafting of the strategy was the size of the suspected area, the analysis of strategic needs, the assumed obligations, and available capacities. The funds needed to implement the strategy were estimated at around 334 million USD. The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina will do it outmost to finance more and more gradually each year but great dependence on donor funds is still very much a reality. Insufficient funding can significantly effect the future implementation of adopted strategy.

*Mr. President,*

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the country with the greatest mine problem in Europe, and all the assessments so far have shown that mines will pose a long-term obstacle to the development of the country.

Adoption of the first mine action strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003 was an important success and has had a positive impact on the overall mine action structure and the attitude of the concerned parties towards the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the adoption of Strategy, the conditions for strategic planning in Bosnia and Herzegovina are more favourable than before: co-ordination and co-operation exist within the structure; the confidence of donors has been restored; the participation of local authorities in the funding is greater than expected; important experience has been gained in the implementation of the Strategy and problems to be resolved have been identified.

So this is the right time and a good opportunity for a new boost in implementation of Mine Action reaffirming, once again, our commitment to the Convention.

Thank you.