



STATEMENT BY DR. DIJANA PLESTINA,
HEAD OF THE CROATIAN DELEGATION TO THE EIGHTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CONVENTION ON THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-
PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

Mr. President, Your Royal Highness, esteemed Co-chairs, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Croatian delegation I would like to express our pleasure at finding ourselves in your country and congratulate you and your able team headed by Ms. Lina Abu Nuwar Ghazi for the courage to undertake the task of hosting the 8th Meeting of State Parties and for doing it so well. The opening ceremony was both sobering and delightful, and the meetings and side events have been most instructive.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing president, Ambassador Caroline Miller and her team for a job well done.

Since the beginning of systematic activities on de-mining in the Republic of Croatia in 1998, more than 290 million EUR has been spent for de-mining related activities. Of this figure some 85% have been Croatian funds. De-mining was a precondition for reconstruction of houses and infrastructure that were destroyed in the 1991 - 1995 war. Now, when the majority of the problems related to the return of displaced persons have been solved, we are continuing with de-mining activities on agricultural land and other areas needed for the social and economic recovery of mine affected regions of Croatia.

De-mining capacities in Croatia are well developed. There are 28 operating de-mining companies and 1 NGO (Norwegian Peoples Aid) with 616 de-miners, 54 de-mining machines, 125 mine detection dogs and more than 700 metal-detectors operating in Croatia.

Having in mind the request to strictly confine ourselves to new information and to be as brief as possible, we would like to stress only two points:

1. Mine-suspected area in Croatia has been reduced to some 950 km² of which we estimate some 15-20 % to be mined.
2. Between January and October 2007, some 30 km² have been returned to the communities for safe use and we expect to return another 10 km² by the end of this year.

While clearing lands of AP mines our de-miners also clear other ERWs and UXOs including cluster munitions as they find them. We take this opportunity to express our support for, and inclusion in the group of organizations and countries which are working towards the banning of cluster munitions. When a problem exists – it is necessary to acknowledge its existence as a precondition to solving it, and we applaud the Coalition against Cluster Munitions for its work in this area.

Although a large sum of money has been invested in de-mining, it has not been nearly enough to fulfill Croatia's obligations under the Convention. With the current financing Croatia is able to release approximately 40 km² per year. Yet, in order to fulfill our obligations under the Convention, we will have to increase yearly land return to more than 70 km². As result, Croatia will be submitting Article 5 extension request for 10 years. However, to meet the extended deadline we will need to double yearly funding to at least 70 million Euros.

If we are serious about meeting our objectives and our deadline for a mine-free Croatia, both the Croatian Government and the international community of mine-free donor states will have to increase their efforts.