

Ninth Meeting

Geneva, 24 – 28 November 2008

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of requests
submitted under Article 5**

**REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR
COMPLETING THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION,
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Submitted by Bosnia and Herzegovina*

1. War in Bosnia and Herzegovina caused the mine problem, which produced severe consequences for the country's population and its socio-economic development. Efforts to release mine contaminated areas and eliminate the mine impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina started after the end of the conflict. In 1996, the United Nations Mine Action Centre was established (UNMAC) in order to build a local management structure and operational mine action capacity.
2. The first estimation of the size of the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated that 4,200 square kilometres of land was mine contaminated or 8.2 percent of the total country territory. The number of available minefield records was 19,057, which was considered to be approximately 50-60 percent of the real number.
3. Minefields in Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed by warring parties primarily between confrontation lines in order to prevent or slow down movements of army units into the areas of other warring parties. Minefields were also placed in front of strategic facilities under the control of warring parties, such as military barracks.
4. Minefields were placed throughout the country, from Herzegovina on the south and southwest of the country, through high mountainous and ravine areas of central Bosnia to plains areas in the north of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is obvious that minefields were present on all types of vegetation prevailing in the country (rocks, bushes, high grass and forest).
5. The socio-economic impact and the impact of mines on development in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been significant. From 1992 to 1996 during the war, there was a total of

* Submitted after due date and as soon as received by the Secretariat.

3,355 mine casualties in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from mine clearance and the removal of abandoned mines, one of the main goals of mine action is to reduce number of mine victims.

6. The initial method used to identify minefields in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to use minefield records and information gathered from combatants. However, these information sources, though useful, have proven to be unreliable.

7. In mid 1998, a local structure was established, comprised of the entity centres and one central Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMIC). In the first phase, the number of humanitarian demining organizations was increased, the first national mine action standards were issued and financial resources were improved, as well as the provision of professional training.

8. The adoption of the Law on Demining in 2002 established a central structure, BHMIC, at the state level, immediately under the Ministry of Civil Affairs. In the same year, the first Mine Action Strategy was made for the period 2002-2009, which significantly improved the functionality of the structure, along with quality assurance, cost-efficiency and effectiveness of the overall process. However, the process continues to be followed by a lack of funding for mine action, especially for humanitarian demining operations.

9. Humanitarian demining in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes systematic and general survey and preparation of project documentation done by BHMIC, while technical survey operations, clearance of land and houses, underwater clearance operations and removal of explosive remnants of war is done by accredited demining organisations.

10. In the period 2003-2004, a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was carried out in accordance with international standards, revealing the size of the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the beginning of mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 until the present, accredited demining companies demined 85.5 square kilometres of the land. During this period, 46,487 anti-personnel mines were found and destroyed, as well as 7,077 anti-tank mines and 39,919 other explosive remnants of war. In addition, 751 houses were cleared of mines during the period 1996-2007.

11. The main priority during humanitarian demining operations was the return of populations and the establishment of a safe socio-economic environment, proven by the fact that 78 percent of the released land is category I risk area.

12. Besides clearance of risk areas, big efforts have been invested in order to prevent individuals from entering suspect or risk areas. During the period 2003-2007, the total number of people educated through mine risk education program was 247,380.

13. Marking of the borders of mine suspected areas is conducted using materials that last for approximately one year. It is usually an integrated part of mine risk education activities in impacted communities and is a very effective risk release measure. The total number of marking signs placed in this manner during the period 1998-2007 was 35,000. Permanent marking, or the placement of resistant material signs, is done on third priority category locations, where clearance or technical survey is planned to be conducted in the next few years. It has proven to

be a very efficient risk release measure. During the period 2000-2007, a total of 50 square kilometres has been marked using this method.

14. The method used to control and assure quality involves technical supervision over demining tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This technical supervision is done by the BHMAC. Sampling for determination of quality control is done as a part of technical supervision as well as issuance of a quality control certificate. Demined areas and facilities are handed over to their owners for further use. During the period 1998-2007 BHMAC inspection teams conducted 31,498 technical supervisions on 2,770 demining tasks, the average number of inspections per task being 11.37.

15. The fact that one-third of the available minefield records cannot be applied on the field, contributes to the size of the problem. Furthermore, climatic circumstances shorten the duration of the demining season, which reflects on the intensity of land release and non-fulfilment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's plan.

16. Twelve years after the end of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country still faces the problem of a high level of mine contamination. New assessments in 2007 determined the presence of 220,000 abandoned mines and other explosive remnants of war and identified 1,631 mine impacted communities. It is estimated that mines and other explosive remnants of war directly impact approximately 921,513 people, out of which 154,538 people live in communities with high impact, 342,550 people in medium impacted communities and 424,425 people in low impacted communities.

17. During last 10 years, 2,445 square kilometres of suspect area in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been released through systematic, general and technical survey and mine clearance. At the end of 2007, the size of suspect area in Bosnia and Herzegovina amounted to 1,755 square kilometres, or 3.42 percent of the total country territory. During the period 1998-2007, 2,139 square kilometres of suspect area was released through systematic survey operations. Systematic survey represents an analytical research procedure used to estimate mine suspected area in Bosnia and Herzegovina where war activities used to occur in order to estimate the true mine threat, size and characteristics of the suspected area based on the gathered information. In the period 1998-2007, 220.3 square kilometres of suspect area was released through general survey operations. General survey represents a set of mutually connected and adjusted activities used to collect data and process information on position, pattern and basic characteristics of areas suspected to be mine contaminated. Humanitarian demining operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina released 85.5 square kilometres of suspect area with clearance operations responsible for approximately 61.3 square kilometres of this while technical survey operations released 24.2 square kilometres of it.

18. From the beginning of the demining process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mined areas have been directly connected with the return of populations and reconstruction of infrastructure. According to information provided by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, during the conflict there were a total of 2.2 million refugees and displaced persons. Until 2007, 1 million people returned to their homes and mine action significantly contributed to the return. It is also important to mention that all urban centres in Bosnia and

Herzegovina and settled rural areas have been released from mine impact, the majority of the remaining suspect areas are forest area and less accessible locations.

19. Regarding the funding of mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the previous 10 years, the majority of funds were allocated by international donors and a smaller portion by local budgets and legal entities.

20. The main reason for not fulfilling the obligations in the previous 10 years is mainly due to the size of the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the lack of funding required for humanitarian demining operations.

21. Bosnia and Herzegovina's Mine Action Strategy (2009-2019) predicts that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be a mine free country by 2019. Funds necessary for the realisation of this goal in following the 10 year period amounts to 790 million KM. The adoption of a new mine action law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is now in preparation for the parliamentary procedure, will create conditions for stable and continuous funding of mine action from local government budgets, stimulating maintenance and improvement of donor support. Regarding the new sources, it is important to emphasise that Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry of Finance and Treasury recognises the necessity to ensure the shortfall of funds (new sources) from local budgets.

22. The elimination of mine risks for the population, and the socio-economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be solved through an integral approach to mine action in high impacted communities and through individual activities in other impacted communities, aimed to eliminate risk and to create conditions to use particular resources, enable reconstruction and have sustainable returns.

23. In accordance with Article 5, Paragraph 1, Bosnia and Herzegovina requests an extension of time for implementation of the Convention for a period of 10 years, due to the fact that after 12 years since beginning mine action activities, the country still faces a problem of high mine contamination. Despite effort and significant progress, mines still present one of the main obstacles for the safety of the population and the socio-economic development of the country.
