

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Achieving completion**

**Thursday, 11 November 2020**

### **I. Introduction and participants**

On 11 November 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with the support of the Implementation Support Unit, invited State and civil society representatives to engage in an open and frank discussion regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina's needs and challenges in implementing its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

In preparation for the event, participants received an attendance package; including invitation, agenda together, Bosnia and Herzegovina's presentation (delivered version attached) and . These documents will be made available on Bosnia and Herzegovina's country page of the Convention website<sup>1</sup>.

### **II. Participants**

**States:** Colombia, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and Zambia.

**Organizations:** European Union, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), The HALO Trust, ICBL, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### **III. Welcoming Remarks**

Following a welcome and overview of the individualised approach by the Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance. H.E. Nermina Kapetanovic, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations shared opening remarks. Mirna Pavlović, Chairperson of the Demining Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina provided further overview of Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutional organisation of mine action.

Both speakers highlighted the difficulties faced due to Covid-19 and thanked donors and partners for their continued support in addressing the remaining challenge faced by anti-personnel Mines in the country.

### **IV. Overview of Bosnia and Herzegovina's remaining challenges and needs**

Sasa Obradovic, Director, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMIC), then provided a presentation on the status and progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina's mine action programme. The Director indicated that during the last 18 month extension period Bosnia and Herzegovina carrying your non-technical survey to better determine the remaining challenge.

The Director highlighted over the past 18 months, the Mine Action Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the NGO "Norwegian People's Aid", implemented a project entitled: "General Assessment of Mine Suspected Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2019" funded by the European Union. The project resulted in a clearer picture of the mine situation with priorities set to make the mine action process even more

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/states-parties-to-the-convention/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

transparent and precise. The project processed data for 143 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with potential threat of mines having been confirmed in 118 municipalities, while a total of 478 Mine Suspected Areas<sup>2</sup> were created. Based on the results of this project, by the end of 2020, the Ministry will send a request to the Council of Ministers of BiH to initiate a revision of the Strategy 2018-2025 in order to be in line with the present mine situation.

The Director highlighted the current strategy 2018-2025 has the following 5 strategic objectives:

- Quality information management procedures
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's mine action programme has been promoted in the country and internationally
- The magnitude and impact of the mine contamination program has been specified and confirmed (General Assessment)
- Mine Risk Education
- Victim Assistance

The Director indicated that Bosnia and Herzegovina requires approximately 336 million BAM to fully implement its strategy and indicated the following requirements:

- Funding for the implementation of cluster munitions contracts / ITF tenders
- Funds for the implementation of humanitarian demining contracts / ITF tenders
- Continuation of actions with development of the upgraded web based BH MAC information system
- BHMAS renewal of material and technical assets.

## **V. Summary of Interventions and Discussions**

**ICBL** took the floor to support the Individualised approach initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While expressing that it was unfortunate that Bosnia and Herzegovina was requesting an extension of its Article 5 deadline passed the 2025 aspirational date, the ICBL expressed its hope that with continued support of donors and organisations, completion of its Article 5 deadline during the period of its extension request could be achieved. The ICBL noted the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina sharing accurate data on progress. The ICBL requested further information on land release milestones that showed to be increasing towards the end of the work extension deadline. ICBL also highlighted the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina having in place a resource mobilisation strategy, and congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina on the projection that 45% of its mine action budget would be funded from allocations from the State budget. In closing, ICBL noted the importance of all relevant institutions being fully and actively engaged in driving mine action as top priority to ensure completion by 2025.

**NPA** thanked BHMAC and all partners for their cooperation and coordination. NPA further thanked Germany for the role taken in leading the country coalition approach, (a framework for engagement under the Convention for Cluster Munitions), and the importance this has for Bosnia and Herzegovina. NPA mentioned that it will continue to contribute to Bosnia and Herzegovina's goals toward completion by supporting the building of sustainable national capacities to manage residual contamination and its commitment to gender mainstreaming. NPA indicated the importance of national ownership in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the importance of continued and improved mainstreaming of gender and diversity. The NPA welcomed the update on Bosnia and Herzegovina's information management system and noted the improved operational efficiency and accurate information to be gained from this. The importance of land release has been highlighted for

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<sup>2</sup> An area made up of SHAs and CHAs which encompasses one or more impacted communities and due to economic, cultural or geographical and other reasons is selected as a logical unit. The MSA is selected by BHMAC in close cooperation with the municipal authorities. These areas are then treated comprehensively through the land release procedure.

efficiency and it is very important that this works continues in compliance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

**Germany** thanked the panel for the informative presentations. Germany outlined its objective towards supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina mine free 2025 goal and addressing the challenges and difficulties faced by Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve this aim. Germany noted that it would like to have seen a more ambitious plan. However, Germany further noted that the work plan does provide a pathway for the fulfilment of the goal by 2025, with the effort by all actors this aim can be achievable. Germany outlined that the Country coalition concept was part of its Presidency of the CCM, 2016-2017, as a means to provide a platform that can promote stronger national ownership through linkages with international actors. Germany also highlighted that the approach provides an interface between institutions and actors required for implementation, including those actors outside the Convention or are not States Parties to the Convention. Germany highlighted the due to the COVID-19 situation efforts to establish the Country Coalition did not materialize due to COVID-19 but there were successful meetings and a successful launch of the Country Coalition together with the Deputy Minister of Civil Affairs the Chair of the Demining Commission and the Director of the BHMAC. Germany expressed its interest in providing further information on the country coalition approach to those interested. Germany concluded by seeking clarification regarding funding of Bosnia and Herzegovina's workplan. In particular, if the estimated US \$200 million include all operation and support costs for the period of the extension request? Is it possible to make 2025 or would it take an unreasonable effort?

**The Chair** supported Germany's efforts and highlighted the Committee's work for States Parties to establish national dialogues that will work well with country coalition approach and in particular the work of the Committee on National Mine Action Platforms for regular and continuous dialogue and we think this is something that can be improved in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** responded to the questions and comments from the floor and mentioned that in preparing the work plan have presented a realistic assessment of the countries status. Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that they recently completed a national assessment (survey) of all mined areas, on which the 2027 requested deadline is based. Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned that it estimates US \$200 million will be required in total to complete the job. Bosnia and Herzegovina also highlighted that currently 1,300 people are employed in the sector and it has the capacity to achieve its goals. Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned that it will revise its Mine Action strategy in 2020 and can provide further outputs of its workplan, but at this stage 2027 is the most realistic timeframe. In terms of the 2025 deadline, Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated that the time is necessary to ensure the improvement of land release methodologies and to follow-up with each organization on the ground.

**The GICHD** took the floor mentioning that it is involved in with the demining commission and BHMAC and also takes part in the Country Coalition of Germany. The GICHD welcomed the practical approach taken by BHMAC, the strong signal of national ownership with the presence of the National Demining Commission and highlighted the importance of continuing land release. The GICHD highlighted that operation are not the only thing that makes the country free of mines but it is further supported by strong national ownership good legislation, in particular the pending demining law, and good standards. While the "General Assessment" project has been finalized, there still remains a number of suspected areas which require non-technical survey efforts to continue. The GICHD also highlighted its interest in providing support to Bosnia Herzegovina's strategy and work plan, and that the most efficient way to support financial resources is to set achievable milestones and the efficient use of resources in support of land release. The GICHD indicated that the revision of the strategy need not alter its timelines but focus on what can be done by 2025.

**The Chair** highlighted the fact that the Demining Law was something that has been brought up in a number of cases and welcomed information from Bosnia and Herzegovina in that regard.

**NPA** took the floor welcoming the continued partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina and that it is ready to support building a national capacity to respond to residual contamination, past 2025 or 2027. NPA noted the importance of full implementation of land release in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and encouraged Germany in its capacity as coordinating the country coalition approach to provide platform for NPA and other operators to provide input on the drafting of standards. NPA then sought clarification on the issuance of commercial tenders to address cluster munition contamination.

**The Chair** thanked the States and organisations for their interventions and invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to respond to those point raised and to address the matter of the Demining Law.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** responded by stating that a draft demining law had been sent to parliament noting that the Law is important for the ongoing support to demining in the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina further mentioned that the law will enable the Government to support the processes needed for completion.

In regard to commercial tenders for cluster munition clearance. Bosnia and Herzegovina responded that the tenders will be used to address mixed contaminated areas. Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that it noted commercial tenders would be faster and a more efficient resources to address this contamination.

**Norway** took the floor to thank the panel for Bosnia and Herzegovina's political will, national ownership. Norway noted that the mine action review highly recommended the BHMAL programme and also thanked Germany for their country coalition approach that can ensure proper cooperation between States, operations and donors. Norway noted that Oslo Action Plan, Action#3 focused on States efforts to integrate gender perspectives and diversity into its mine action Norway also highlighted the importance of IMAS compliance and that NMAS be amended so they are in line with IMAS.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** responded that they note the importance of mine action law for mine action and that BHMAL is preparing three (3) new chapters on non-technical survey, technical survey and land release with plans to prepare new standards covering quality assurance, based on international standards.

**The Implementation Support Unit** of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention took the floor to thank the Director for Bosnia and Herzegovina's transparency including through the provision of updates at formal and informal meetings of the Convention. The ISU noted the importance of identifying the current resources at Bosnia and Herzegovina's disposal along with those gaps that are required to get Bosnia and Herzegovina to completion by 2025. The ISU noted that in its experience a strategic plan with regular opportunity for review, for example, every 2 years allows States the opportunity to update its work plan, based on the most up to date information. The ISU closed by noting that under the Convention a State can request an extension of its mine clearance deadline, in this way, the extension request process are not a negative reflection on the State but rather a tool for States Parties to re-commit to their goals, implement country coalitions, national platforms that can coordinate strategic work. The ISU finished by acknowledging Bosnia and Herzegovina's achievement of zero accidents in 2020.

## **VI. Closing remarks**

In closing, H.E. Nermina Kapetanovic, congratulated the Chair and participants for their engagement. H.E. encouraged all participants to support Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve its Article 5 deadline.

Mirna Pavlović, Chairperson of the Demining Commission shared her hope for the new law and for all land to be released from mines.

Sasa Obradovic, Director, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre, closed by stating that the event provided an important opportunity for all stakeholders to see what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Director mentioned that they are preparing for a conference on mine action with the Convention's Implementation Support Unit (ISU), (Supported by the European Council decision), and is preparing new land release projects. The Director shared his hope that all capacities will be in place for demining, including new regulations for land release, and an action plan for the next 3 years that includes donors and other actors.

The Chair of the Committee on the enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance reiterated the strong national ownership shown by Bosnia and Herzegovina and noted the partners ready to support the country in their endeavours. The Chair encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina and partners to further engage on the challenges and conditions in which Bosnia and Herzegovina operates its demining program and what Bosnia and Herzegovina needs from its partners to achieve completion.

The Chair further mentioned that a report on the meeting will be circulated among all participants and posted on Bosnia and Herzegovina's country page of the Convention's website. The Chair also welcomes any questions and its readiness to assist in facilitating interested States Parties and Bosnia and Herzegovina in areas of support.

For further information on the Mine Action Program in Bosnia and Herzegovina please direct all queries to:

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