



**REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**19<sup>th</sup> 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**

**The Hague, 15 to 19 November 2021**

**Agenda item 10.b**

**Clearing mined areas, Mine Risk Education and Reduction**

**Civil Protection Directorate**

**Ministry of the Interior**

**November, 2021**

**Mr. President, esteemed colleagues,**

### ***Clearance***

At the beginning of November 2021, hazardous area (HA) in the Republic of Croatia covered 221 km<sup>2</sup>, as a result of demining activities and non-technical and technical survey, which was determined inside 8 counties and 43 towns and municipalities contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance. On the basis of available minefield records, we presume that the HA is contaminated with approximately 15,255 mines. At the moment, the entire HA of the Republic of Croatia is marked with more than 8,782 warning signs, i.e. approximately 39 warning signs per square kilometre of hazardous area. According to HA structure, 98.7% comprises of forests and forest land. Although the comprehensive marking of HA and continuous mine risk education in the past few years resulted with the fact that there were no mine accidents or incidents with fatalities (the last fatality was accounted in 2016), regrettably, in March 2021, we had one mine incident in the Karlovac County, in an marked area, where 7 illegal migrants injured, with unfortunately one fatality.

In 2020, Croatia cleared more than 49,2 km<sup>2</sup> of mined area, which is an increase of more than 25% on the output in comparison with 2019, despite operations being halted for nearly two months between March and May due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The amount of mined area released through non-technical and technical survey activities in 2020 also represented an increase in comparison with the previous year, jointly reaching 11.4 km<sup>2</sup>.

Although increased output and results reached the total of 61 km<sup>2</sup> of hazardous areas released through survey and clearance activities in 2020, the most ambitious annual goal established in the Revised work plan of 70 km<sup>2</sup> for 2020 had unfortunately not been reached. Therefore, this difference will be tackled accordingly in the forthcoming years all with updated annual implementation and financial projections harmonised with the Oslo Action Plan guidelines and with the final goal of Croatia without mines by 2026. This will mostly be reflected in the scope of annual mine clearance of military areas which are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and their limited capacities.

At the same time, the financing of mine action activities has been in line with the good trends and enhanced support within European Union grants that has continued this year as well, amounting to approximately EUR 21.2 million or almost 40% of the current annual demining budget, with a strong indication and optimism that the EU will continue to support demining in Croatia in the forthcoming programming period as well.

In the current year, the Republic of Croatia is on track to achieve the planned mine action goals and increased output has been set to compensate the difference between the results achieved in 2020 and the Revised Plan milestones by 1,3 km<sup>2</sup>. As of November 2021, the implementation rate of land release is within the planned framework with more than 2,475 ERWs found and destroyed.

### ***Mine Risk Education (MRE)***

Regular mine risk education activities conducted by the Civil Protection Directorate with police officers and civil society associations were conducted in line with the annual Mine Risk Education and Informing Plan, and in accordance with proper epidemiological measures. In 2020, 47 programmes were implemented with

participation of approximately 4,600 citizens (mainly preschool and older children along with residents of areas in the vicinity of HA). Concerning up-to-date activities, until October 2021, 44 educational programmes were implemented in 5 counties and 10 municipalities with participation of approximately 1,870 citizens, mainly preschool and older children. In addition, a public round table on MRE activities was organized and MRE was provided through participation of the MoI officials at several public fairs in counties with mine problem along with special tailor-made educations provided to fire fighting departments.

In addition to regular MRE activities, we would like to emphasize an important milestone achieved in one of the projects financed from the support of the EU. The strategic project NATURAVITA, one of the largest nature protection projects in Croatia mainly funded by the European Union Cohesion fund, after finalizing demining activities, among others, has continued with the renovation of an educational visitors centre "Podravlje" officially opened during October 2021, where mine risk education programs will be conducted. In addition to the development of educational programs for specific target groups along with the guidelines for the mentioned educational materials intended to raise awareness on mine threats such as special MRE leaflets, brochures and most importantly children picture books were also finalized. Future educational project activities will be concluded with the procurement of several educational plays on mine risk danger intended for the youngest pupils and adapted to their age.

To conclude, Mr. President, esteemed colleagues, implementation of land release in 2020, and continuously in 2021, in spite of unfavourable conditions, has almost reached the projected indicators of the annual revised plan, at the same time meeting all of the epidemiological measures. Considering the Oslo Action Plan guidelines, the presented results may be deemed very positive, but we are at the same time aware of our challenges and tend towards increasing our engagement in the forthcoming years, with an aim of meeting the deadlines and obligations under the Convention.

Thank you