

SPEECH

2023 Intersessional Meeting of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti – personnel Mines and on their Destruction, 19-21 June 2023

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is my honor and a pleasure to be here with you today. As far as I can see, I believe that the coming days will be useful and fulfilling.

Allow me to share my appreciation to Germany and the States Parties for giving me an opportunity to participate and to stand here in front of you, as a survivor from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

You see, Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of the first countries in the world, to join the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines in 1998.

At that time, we were a country devastated by these awful weapons.

Many saw the terrible consequences of landmines in our country.

It's now 25 years since I became a victim of landmine. My accident happened three years after the war had ended. One pleasant visit on a Sunday evening to a country side near Sarajevo changed my life.

It was around 5 p.m. when we were walking when I heard an explosion and felt something hot sliding down my leg I realized that I had lost my leg.

My life since then has been a roller coaster.

When I look at my life now, reflecting on my life before and after the accident, I can see a lot of ups and downs.

The road of recovery was very difficult, I remember the first time I was fitting my new leg and the pain that I felt. I was afraid how would my friends react, because then I felt that I was not equal as them as one of my body parts was missing.

After my accident my parents had to struggle to be able to care for me ."Mine victim" is not only the person who suffers the accident but also his or her family and community more broadly.

Special recognition is needed for those who care for persons who are injured or the families left behind of those killed.

With the support of my family and friends, I became a graduated journalist, Professional swimmer and active member in my community. Still, I didn't manage to get appropriate employment in my country.

I was able to move forward, receive rehabilitation, and see first-hand the progress in mine clearance.

I have been fortunate to be in a country where in spite of the challenges on clearance and victim assistance there is hope. My city, Sarajevo finally was recently declared mine free.

But as I stand here today, I can not to think about thousands of survivors and their family members, people still living in affected areas and challenges they face every day.

However, other persons injured by mines in other countries are facing even greater challenges --- those persons have yet to receive assistance and continue living surrounded by landmines because clearance is a challenge due to security situation, lack of resources or even low national ownership.

In this beautiful city it is safe to pass by the lake but what about that many women have to walk near minefields to fetch water or children have to go near minefields just to go to school?

I remind you that new casualties are being registered in places like Colombia, Ukraine, Sudan, and Yemen.

Assistance needs to go to places with emerging needs, but also to places like Ecuador, Peru, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal, which could meet their mine clearance deadline by 2025 if they were to receive assistance for their clearance programmes.

Remember that there are many survivors today that still need support, so while you are taking out the landmines and destroying them, making sure that people can walk freely and use the land, please do not forget that the needs of victims will stay the same.

Mine free is not a victim free. I will ask you to keep that in mind and not forget the victims.

I will thank donor countries for their support to my country and other countries that receive funds for mine clearance but also remind those countries, and all others in a position to help, to extend support for victim assistance and development. Assistance to victims is a continuous need and can't stop.

I call on those countries in the room that have not yet joined the convention to make their part towards a mine-free world where survivors rights are guaranteed and their needs met.

Thank you all, for taking care of what is the most valuable and sacred human life and human limbs.

Thank you