

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention



Intersessional meetings | 19-21 June 2023 Geneva

Statement - Mine Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr President, Excellencies,

Taking responsibility of becoming state party to the Ottawa Treaty, Bosnia and Herzegovina took over commitment to preserve lives and mitigate the socio-economic consequences of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. It makes me proud that my country has been an active partner in the international community's fight against anti-personnel mines and we are strongly united in banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of these harmful assets.

Mines and other remnants of war as one of the worst consequences of war, still contaminate our land, making normal life of the civilian population sometimes impossible. The consequences have a destructive impact on our population, as well as on environment and national economy.

Being aware that every step can lead to a danger's path, demining is a key to re-build the life without fear, and safe economy and tourism process.

Despite strong efforts over the past decade and more, our country is still one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world and the most severely affected in the region.

From the beginning of technical survey and mine clearance operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an area of 3,328 km² was

returned to safe use and about 153,872 pieces of mines and ERW were found and destroyed.

The current size of the suspected hazardous area is 858 km², which is about 1.67% of the total country size.

Based on a more precise understanding of the remaining challenge and in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, Bosnia and Herzegovina requested an extension of the deadline of six (6) years from March 1, 2021 until March 1, 2027.

Returning land to use is closely related to the state's goals of sustainable development, because numerous minefields in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a social, economic, humanitarian, commercial and ecological impact. Considering that BiH is paving the way to sustainable development, mine action should be seen as something that not only removes danger to reduce accidents and fear, but something that enables and accelerates wider sustainable development. Through the mine action program in BiH, efforts will be made to better understand the impacts and opportunities brought by clearance, in terms of enabling development and contributing to the fulfillment of sustainable development goals.

Results and indicators in this year, as well as the expected implementation of projects financed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America, as principal donors for mine action, inspire hope for achieving better results in the coming year. Also, the implementation of two important projects is underway, including project "Brčko without mines" and "Via Majevisa", scoping three municipalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and two municipalities in the Republic of Srpska.

In 2023, we are expecting the beginning of implementation through the IPA-Instrument for EU Pre-Accession Assistance, in the total

amount of 10 million euros which are planned through grant funds for 2022, 2023 and 2024, depending on the dynamics of implementation.

In February 2023, the project of the new IMSMA-Core database began, financed by the Federal Republic of Germany.

For this reason, I once again express my gratitude and emphasize the crucial key role and importance of donor contribution in the coming period as well.

In 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina will start revising the Mine Action Strategy for period 2018-2025, the activity which will be carried out by Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center in cooperation with national and international partners.

Mine risk education projects are being implemented by the teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center, accredited demining organizations, mine risk education organizations, EUFOR and IOM, and in 2022 they directly involved 37,000 people. From the beginning of 2023 until today, 42,255 people have been warned of mine danger.

It is always very moving to listen to the testimonies of what it means to live daily with the curse of landmines and unexploded ordinances.

It is also very challenging to hear stories from survivors, people who do not lose hope and do not accept this situation but shape effective mine action. Unfortunately, accidents still happen.

In 2023, there was a mine accident with a fatal outcome, which is why we continue with full capacity warning activities through independent projects, but also through integration into current mine countermeasures operations in order to put mine danger in focus. In this way, we are trying to include consequences and risk which the impacted population encounters in their everyday activities.

Within the framework of the prescribed competencies, we participate in ensuring the conditions for the complete inclusion of mine victims in

the socio economic activities, through participation in the development of programs that will improve psycho-social, medical and other professional services for mine victims.

Putting people at the core of our development efforts, we are working on reintegrating mine victims and their families into society as productive members, through physical and psychological rehabilitation with a focus on their socio-economic empowerment.

We are expecting that in 2023, the Coordinating Body for Mine Victims Assistance will also be reactivated in order to coordinate mine victim assistance projects and to raise awareness about needs of mine victims within the society, as well as at national and international level.

Mine action efforts are an essential component of Bosnia and Herzegovina journey to stability and there cannot be any assurance of safety, when roads and fields are mined, and when children can still find and play with objects that might explode and when people who are aware of risk, still entering the mine zone, because their life depends on it.

Human life, human dignity and human rights will always be at the core of our work to achieve a mine-free world.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who are involved in the field of Mine Action: at community and national level, and, of course, donor's community and the many other important actors who contribute to this endeavor.

We are well aware that we are all conducting this life-saving work under extremely challenging circumstances, often even risking our own life. We sadly remember those who lost their lives in their important work for humanity.

Thank you for your attention !