

5th Review Conference Siem Reap-Angkor Summit



24 – 29 November 2024

Statement – Mine Victim Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr President

Twenty nine years after the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains one of the most mine contaminated countries in the world and the most affected country in the region. The size of the suspected hazardous area is 826 km², which is approximately 1.6% of the total country size.

Based on a more precise understanding of the remaining challenge and in accordance with Article 5, Paragraph 1 of the Ottawa Convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina requested and achieved a six (6) year extension, from March 1, 2021 to March 1, 2027.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has developed a key document for planning and coordinating demining activities and assistance for mine victims, titled the "Mine Action Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina." This strategy aims to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to combating the dangers posed by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), as well as to provide adequate support to mine victims.

Strategic Goal No. 5 addresses support for mine victims and states: All mine/UXO victims participate in society on an equal footing with others, their needs are identified and met, and their existential conditions are improved through rights-based assistance that respects diversity.

A total of 8,471 persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina have either lost their lives or been injured in mine/UXO accidents between 1992 and 2024. The trend of decreasing mine victims continues compared to previous years, as Bosnia and Herzegovina has been making additional efforts to reduce the number of mine victims across all aspects of mine action. There were no mine accidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina this year.

In accordance with the Demining Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, funds for mine action activities will be ensured through donor sources, the budgets of Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions and other sources. In 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina began implementing the EU Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) project. We will aim to allocate a portion of these funds for future mine victim assistance programs. This will be achieved by conducting a review of the mine victim database and assessing their needs. These are essential steps for realizing our vision in the coming period, as we will have an updated assessment of mine victims' needs, allowing us to prepare adequate support programs.

This is also a key task for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025, along with the re-establishment of the Coordinating Body for Mine/Cluster Munition/UXO Victim Assistance, which serves as an expert and advisory body to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its role is to coordinate with all organizations and institutions involved in mine victim assistance and to advocate for the integration of mine victim support into relevant coordination

mechanisms, including healthcare, social protection, disability, education and poverty reduction.

The complexity of the various levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina presents a significant challenge for implementing mine victim assistance activities and this has been identified as one of the main problems in program implementation.

In recent years, through cooperation between non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, international donors, local authorities and communities, a number of innovative and significant projects have been implemented. These projects aimed not only at providing direct assistance to mine victims but also at building sustainable mechanisms for their long-term support.

Through the project " Digital Management of Demined Land in the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina" the mine victim database was revised and one layer of information relates to mine survivors and families of mine victims, their locations and living conditions.

These data are crucial for the safety and protection of mine survivors in high-risk and emergency situations, as well as for their social and economic inclusion. The project will serve as a model for the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in collecting and analyzing data in the new IMMSMA CORE database.

A mine victim assistance project, financed by the Federal Republic of Germany in the regions of Herzegovina and northeastern Bosnia, provided support to 37 mine victims. They received new, high-quality prosthetics, ensuring not only functionality but also satisfying high aesthetic standards.

Furthermore, the project "Beekeeping as a Tool for Empowering Mine Victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Phase 3" was implemented, with partners and donors including ITF Slovenia, the Beekeeping Academy of Slovenia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska.

An educational training for mine victims was also held, with the goal of training mine victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina to manage small businesses in beekeeping, providing opportunities for acquiring beekeeping equipment and facilitating networking among mine victims engaged in beekeeping.

Bosnia and Herzegovina faces enormous challenges regarding mines and unexploded ordnance, but through coordinated efforts at all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and international partners, significant results have been achieved. The key projects and initiatives presented today will ensure support for survivors, improve the victim database and facilitate a better understanding of mine victims' needs.

Our shared goal is to ensure that all mine victims have equal opportunities to live in safety and dignity, with their full social and economic inclusion.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our successes and challenges.