

# **GICHD Comments on BiH Article 5 Extension Request**

## **Progress & Achievements**

- It is extremely positive to observe that BiH is embracing the land release process:

From 2013 to 2016, with EU support, BiH implemented the “Land Release project”, fully endorsing the LR concept and developing its first chapters for new standards on LR, NTS and TS. This project resulted in 91% of targeted area cancelled through NTS, 8.5% reduced through TS and only 0.5% required to be cleared.

In 2017, with support from the GICHD, BHMAC developed a new national MA strategy, fully supporting the Land Release process.

An amended Demining Law has also been draft and is currently waiting for the formal approval from the parliament.

New NTS SOPs have been developed and are in use. It is expected that any area without the evidence of contamination will be released through cancellation.

- The UNDP-supported project to improve IM through the development of a web-based database is expected to bring better accessibility and transparency of data.

## **Remaining Challenge**

- BiH remains the most mine affected country in Europe, with 2.1% of its territory potentially hazardous to use. BiH is requesting a two year interim extension (2019-2021) in order to review and better define the size of its remaining problem.
- In 2018, BHMAC started a project – supported by the EU and in partnership with NPA – to define the size of the remaining area affected by mines/explosive devices, which will be used as a basis for realistic operational and financial planning. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2019 and to form the basis of the next (and likely final) extension request, expected in March 2020.
- The 2-year interim extension request should allow BHMAC to implement the aforementioned projects, which in turn will help to more realistically define the

remaining problem and allow for better planning from an operational and financial perspective.

## Concerns

- Even though the new national MA strategy was presented over six months ago, it is still not formally approved and it is unclear why the process is taking so much time. It is important for this to be finalised, especially given the fact that operational and financial plans need to be developed accordingly, which will require additional time.
- Similarly, the amended Demining Law has been drafted but is still in the process of being officially approved by the Parliament. In order to be able to fulfil its international obligations in timely fashion, relevant authorities of BiH need to be able to make decisions more quickly and to foster an environment in which operations are not hindered.
- Currently, BHMACH is the only organisation that conduct NTS in BiH (with support from the Armed Forces and occasionally other organisations). BHMACH should try to foster an environment in which operators can carry out more unrestricted field activities and where BHMACH takes more of a monitoring and regulatory role.
- It is widely expected that the new assessment of the size of the problem in BiH will result in large cancellation of areas containing no evidence of contamination; it still remains to be seen what the actual result of these activities will be and what effect it will have on further planning and future of MA in BiH.
- When it comes to demining, BiH remains largely dependent on financial aid from international donors. The state of BiH should try looking into possibilities to rely more on its own resources and be less driven by a need for international support.
- Finally, BiH needs to be open to transparent sharing of data with the donors and other relevant stakeholders and to continue working towards fulfilling its international obligations in partnership with the national and international operators.

Thank you