



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

STATEMENT

Meetings of the Standing Committees of the Ottawa Convention Geneva, 23.-27. 04. 2007.

Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies 25.04.2007.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the State parties which are in process of fulfilling the Article 5. obligations and our annual Mine action plans for mine clearance projects, reflect clearly our intensive efforts to maximally reduce our mine suspected areas and to clear present mine fields.

In that respect Bosnia and Herzegovina during last year has maintained high level of mine clearance and suspected area reduction through number of systematic survey, technical survey and mine clearance projects.

Applying different mine actions in 2006 mine suspected area in Bosnia and Herzegovina was reduced for around 239 km², out of which through technical survey and mine clearance operations 10.3 million m² of mine contaminated area were cleared and rest of 229 km² was reduced through analysis and estimation of suspected area within systematic and general survey.

During mine clearance operations 3500 APM, 164 ATM and 1500 UXO were found and destroyed. This number represent average of 11, 12 mines per hectare of cleared mine fields.

Unfortunately last year we suffered an increase in mine incidents and in number of new mine victims. In 2006, there were 35 casualties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, out of which 18 dead and 17 injured persons. Victims were mostly male adults, fully aware of danger but still entering risk areas primarily for firewood cutting which was one of the sources of their income.

In order to avoid these kind of accidents in future, all mine risk education organizations along with national authorities and local forestry management, a in process of adjustment of their programs and activities of necessary education to target this most endangered group. General recommendation to all MRE organizations is to focus their activities on operational engagement within local communities, especially on suspected area marking and targeted use of local media before, during and after humanitarian demining operations.

Total funds allocated for mine action process in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2006 were around 22.5 million Euro out of which national authorities on different levels and local communities invested 10 million Euro, or around 45 % of total, while 12.5 million Euro represent foreign donations. This total of 22.5 million Euro was around 70% of total funds needed to fulfill our annual mine clearance plan and to keep up with strategic projections given in our present Mine action strategy.

Therefore in order to fulfill our strategic projections till 2009 a number of mine clearance and technical survey tasks are reassigned to our annual plan for this year.

Further significant reduction of mine suspected area through systematic survey will be regular Mine Action Centre activity in 2007. During systematic survey, continuous assessment of the mine situation will be conducted through visits to suspected areas and more precise identification of existing risk level. Planned reduction of suspected area through this method for this year is around 185 million m².

Accredited demining organizations shall conduct technical survey and clearance, all based on humanitarian demining operational plan. Distribution of area per region is set with the respect of a size of suspected area and planned level of humanitarian demining operations in certain impacted community. Total size of mined areas planned for technical survey is 16.5 million m², or more precisely 10,7 million m² of first priority category and 5.8 million m² of second priority category.

Above all of this further 5.5 million m² of mine fields is planned for mine clearance projects.

So all together Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine action plan for 2007 foresee reduction of mine suspected area and mine fields in total of around 207 million m² Tasks of mine risk education in 2007. originate from strategic and operational goals set in Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Strategy.

Continuation of integrated mine action approach is planned in 2007. BH Mine Action Centre will conduct survey, risk assessment and integration of different mine actions in 25 high impacted communities. For each of these impacted communities, integrated mine action plan will be papered, including mine risk education plan. Main idea of these plans is to increase risk reduction effects with optimal use of resources, available funding and mutual liaison of different mine action activities.

Urgent marking is an integrated part of mine risk activities in impacted community, representing very efficient risk reduction measure. In 2007, it is planned to urgently mark 133,5 km², what requires app. 20.000 mine warning signs. Besides Mine Action Centre, for the realization of plan it is necessary to engage accredited demining organizations and mine risk education organizations.

At the beginning of this school year 2006/2007 we started with the mine risk education program in elementary and secondary schools. The school teachers will be trained on the proper implementation of mine risk education program compiled in the handbook and other accompanying pedagogical and deductive material. This material is a part of integration of mine risk education into school curriculum, done by authorized Ministries with the support of Handicap International.

During 2007, it is planned to hold 1 course for mine risk education instructors, 3 courses for mine risk education management and 2 courses for quality assurance, which will be attended by 120 persons from different mine risk education organizations.

Funds needed to achieve these goals in mine clearance and mine risk education for this year amount to around 27 million Euro. Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities through its budgets on different government levels and through work of our state demining capacities mainly BH army and civil protection demining teams will cover around 45% of this amount. Earmarked donor funds for this year will cover additional 40%, but we still are short for additional donor support of 15% or 4 million Euro to be able to finalize financial backup for our 2007 annual Mine action plan.

In this respect, Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to inform all State Parties, emphasizing those donor countries, that problem of implementation of BH Law on Value Added Tax on donor financed demining projects, which somewhat burden demining process during second part of last year and threatened to endanger further donor funding, has been solved.

Namely the independent BH Indirect Taxation Authority as result of the strong engagement of the BH demining institutions and bodies, reaffirm implementation of mechanism of VAT exemption on supply of goods and services in the cases of international aid projects within the framework of international treaties.

This is applicable for all donor funds and projects for Mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina including those implemented through International Trust Fund for demining (ITF) based in Slovenia, which also apply under mentioned VAT exemption mechanism given by the respective BH Law on VAT.

Mr. Chairman,

Bosnia and Herzegovina once again reaffirm its commitment to fulfill all the aims and requirements of the Ottawa Convention and we will proceed with our best efforts to do so.

Nevertheless, despite our best efforts Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we already stated on 7MSP held in Geneva last September, will not be in position to completely fulfill obligations stated under article 5. of the Convention by the 01. March 2009 which is our key date.

Therefore Bosnia and Herzegovina express its full support to the work of the Presidency and the states chairing and co-chairing this committee for the preparation of proper documents namely questionnaires, calendars of the key dates and other proper mechanisms which will enable us to accomplish preparations for requesting extension and in that respect to facilitate future completion of obligations given under article 5. of the Convention.

In this regard Bosnia and Herzegovina will briefly report on our present work-in-progress on this issue shortly, with the respect of forthcoming agenda items of this Committee.

Thank you Mr. Chairman