

Intersessional Standing Committee meetings on Ottawa Convention
April 23-27, 2007, Geneva
Standing Committee on Mine clearance, Mine Risk Education
and Mine Technologies

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

STATEMENT

Mr/Madam Co-Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Problems connected with mine clearance in the Republic of Serbia are numerous and are mostly conditioned by specificity of the mine situation and lack of funds for clearance operations.

The specificity of the mine problem in Serbia is reflected in the fact that in our territory apart from minefields contaminated with antipersonnel and antitank mines, there are significant areas contaminated with unexploded cluster bombs, air bombs and other projectiles.

For the coordination of demining and management of related projects, in 2002 in Serbia the Mine Action Centre was founded for whose work necessary funds are allocated from the budget of the Republic of Serbia.

The Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) has qualified personnel and is technically equipped for the implementation of the works for which it is authorized by the Serbian Law.

After SMAC was established, as the national coordinator for demining, survey and marking of minefields in Serbia have been executed, projects for demining of all micro locations have been made, and the area of 3.000.000 sqm has been cleared, where 4.500 mines of various types have been detected and destroyed.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopts Demining Program for each year at the suggestion of SMAC.

During 2007, the Government will also determine Demining Strategy for minefields as well as for removal and clearance of cluster bombs in Serbia by 2012.

Minefields in Serbia are still located in the area of approximately 3.500.000 sqm in the border area with Croatia, in the territory of the Municipality of Šid. In the above territory antipersonnel and antitank mines are emplaced in the so-called mixed minefields, which have to be cleared on the whole.

It is estimated that in the above area there are still around 6.400 mines of various types (around 4.120 AP mines and around 2.280 AT mines).

For clearance of minefields in this area approximately 4.000.000 EUR is needed, therefore, we appeal to donors to help us in order that Serbia becomes the country without minefields as soon as possible.

With reference to the above, the Serbian Mine Action Centre and the Croatian Mine Action Centre achieve various forms of cooperation through the South Eastern European Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC), as well as through bilateral exchange of data and experiences, including making of joint demining projects.

Clearance of minefields in the border area with Croatia in the Jamena village and the Morović village in the area of 250.000 sqm is in progress. The funds for that purpose have been provided by the Norwegian Government.

Serbia will within 10 years after ratification of the Ottawa Convention, namely by 2014, fulfill its Article 5 obligations from the Convention. However, Serbia is planning to clear all minefields from its territory long before this deadline, namely by the end of 2008. This can be impeded only by the lack of funds.

There are no areas contaminated with minefields in central Serbia. Large areas in central Serbia, as well as in some other parts of Serbia are contaminated with cluster bombs, which are suspected to be in the area of approximately 23.000.000 sqm.

Demining operations in Serbia, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards, are conducted by commercial companies and NGOs after being selected by public tenders.

The Army of the Republic of Serbia is not engaged in the works of humanitarian demining. The Army clears military objects and military land and is engaged in the surface examination. Currently, the Army is engaged in conducting surface examination of the areas of Paraćin and Čuprija in the vicinity of the depot, in which on October 19, 2006, fire and explosion occurred.

SMAC performs activities related to general survey and marking of the areas that are contaminated with unexploded ordnance and their parts in Paraćin and Čuprija, which will be executed after the Army of the Republic of Serbia completes the operations of the surface removal of UXO, which during fire and explosion in depot fell on the civilian land and objects, so called civilian areas.

In connection with that, SMAC has approached donors in order to provide funds for the implementation of survey and marking, and in the second phase for search and demining of the area, which needs to be cleared in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards.

SMAC is not directly engaged in demining, therefore SMAC does not have pyrotechnicians and deminers employed for these works. Apart from other things, SMAC executes quality control of demining and for these works 5 trained experts specialized in humanitarian demining operations and quality control of demining are engaged, which is according to so far dynamics of demining in Serbia sufficient.

Thank you for your attention.