

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
STATEMENT**

**Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action  
Technologies  
Geneva, 22.06.2004.**

*Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman,*

Bosnia and Herzegovina still carry severe legacy of war – an extensive number of mine fields and AP mines. It is cruel fact that our country is one of those with greatest mine contamination in Europe and worldwide. Mine fields undoubtedly placing heavy burden on everyday lives of our people and present serious obstacle for socio-economic development of our young country.

Minefields in BH are characterized by a relatively small number of mines, and very often it is a question of a group or an individually placed mine, and generally there is no ordered disposition. The principal problem is not the number of mines, rather it is the relatively low level of contamination, often unknown disposition of the mines and the large area involved, all of which combine to make identification of problem areas a difficult process.

The general assessment of the situation is made on the basis of the results from systematic survey, the results of the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), on going mine action activities and data collected and deposited in the existing BHMIC database or in the databases of other domestic and international organizations.

However, with the end of the first phase of systematic survey and the inputs from LIS the general assessment of the overall mine situation is now within capabilities of BH and favorable conditions for strategic and operational planning are in place.

Landmine Impact Survey results indicates high impact on 154 communities with around 100,000 inhabitants, which everyday live under direct danger of nearby mine fields. In total 1,4 million people in Bosnia and Herzegovina live in areas with different level of mine contamination impact, with agriculture areas as most frequently blocked livelihood resources.

Finding the best approach in efforts to ease this situation presents a great challenge for each and every person working in existing Mine action structures of Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the Ministry cabinets to the last man on the field.

Side to side with development of demining structure and local capacities in past period considerable results in mine clearance were achieved. From 1997 to the end of 2003 approximately 50 km square have been cleared of mines. Through general and

technical survey we reduced suspected area for further 180 km<sup>2</sup>. The annual level of clearance flowing between 5,5 and 7 km<sup>2</sup> and last year 6,5 km<sup>2</sup> was the achieved amount.

Due to comprehensive MRE program and permanent marking projects number of mine victims is steadily decreasing from over a hundred in 1997, and around 80 in 2001 to 54 last year. In first 5 months of this year there was 6 mine or UXO victims and 4 injured people.

A substantial progress has been made in areas of quality control, promotion of the Demining Standards and Standards of Practice, the accreditation process and in overall communication between major BH mine action stakeholders. Since the end of the last year Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the UNDP co-chairing the BH Board of Donors which is important step in process of overtaking the responsibility for Mine Action by national structures.

There is a continuous work on the creation of National MRE Standards, based on recognition of international MRE standards. This will create preconditions for the unified accreditation, project implementation and control system for organisations working in different aspects of Mine Risk Education.

Due to comprehensive expertise and task planning programme the BHMACH enhanced its reputation within mine action organisations throughout the world although complete transformation and upgrading of the BHMACH structure was completed only last year.

While we are still very dependent on donor funds Bosnia and Herzegovina is trying to self invest substantially. National authorities' contribution including public enterprises and local government financial inputs in overall mine action funding are increasing year by year. In 2003 only almost 6,5 million EURO was locally invested. This self-financing scheme doubled in comparison to what have been planed for last year.

According to overall mine action results in first five months of this year we have potential again to do better and more than year before. Mine clearance has been done or is in progress on almost 3 million m<sup>2</sup>. Entity armies or civil protection capacities have done almost 40% of this work. Area of around 30 km<sup>2</sup> has been generally surveyed and 10 km<sup>2</sup> of it without risk is returned to owners. 641 APMs, 123 ATMs and 442 UXOs were found and destroyed.

We are very encouraged with these results but especially with improved cooperation of BHMACH with Entity Armies and Civil Protection in the area of mine clearance and technical survey. This will most certainly boost mine clearance process in Bosnia and Herzegovina in this year.

***Mr. Chairman,***

The presentation of the first Strategy for Mine Action in BH at the beginning of 2002 was a significant success and positively impacted on the whole structure of mine action and other interested parties. This first strategy was based on the BH strategic needs for the resolution of the mine problem and obligations under the Ottawa Convention considered in relation to available capacities.

However, experience at the strategic level has to date highlighted the gap between the real needs of BH in terms of reducing the risk from mines and the possibility to support the appropriate level of humanitarian mine clearance and other elements of mine action. This gap between need and reality is most obviously demonstrated in the inability to fulfill the annual national plans and it is the main reason for the decision by the Demining Commission, in August 2003, to commence a process of a review of the current Strategy.

The process of revision is based on the following principles:

- (1) Harmonization with the UN Strategy for Mine Action 2002 – 2005 and with the strategies of other international organizations.
- (2) Continuation of current best practices having in mind that BII Mine Action Center (BHMAC) and mine action organizations in BH have seven year's experience with a developed capacity for mine action and a mechanism to manage that capacity across the broad spectrum of activities.
- (3) Establishment of the strategy on the stated needs and accepted international obligations of BH with available capacities that has to be balanced between the economic possibilities of the country and the readiness of the international community to financially support that action in BH. Fulfilling this principle will present the greatest problem in the review of the Strategy.
- (4) Orientation toward local communities and their needs for the reduction of the socio economic impact of the risk of mines. In order to fulfill this principle it will be necessary to develop a new system of assessment and planning of tasks, a new model of determining priorities, and to emplace firm integration between all elements of mine action.
- (5) The backing of science and the results of scientifically confirmed investigations in the field of mine action. The process of revision directly follows internationally recognized models for strategic planning in mine action and allows development of advanced techniques of planning in coordination with standards and experience of others in the field of risk management.

The Demining Commission endorsed two working groups to assist with the process of review of Strategy. These groups include representatives of the most important organizations involved with mine action in BH. There is a Strategic Planning Group and Strategic Working Group.

The Strategic Planning Group includes representatives of UNDP, UNICEF, OHR, SFOR, European Commission, BH Ministry of Defense and is chaired by the Demining Commission with the BHMAC acting as secretariat.

Group is made up of institutions and organizations, which with their decisions or politics impact on mine action in BH and acts as the advisory body of the Commission and ultimately the Government.

The tasks of this group are overseeing the process, consideration and verification of the conclusions of the working group, consideration of the evaluation of strategic options and their adoption, consideration of new elements in the strategic process, overview of the final document and suggestions for its adoption.

Second is the Strategic Working Group. This group is chaired by the BHMIC and contains representatives of the important organizations and institutions which are involved in mine clearance and other humanitarian mine action namely NPA, Intersos, HELP, Handicap International, International Trust Fund, BH Civil protection and advisors and consultants.

This group is a technical body which has the task of assisting the BHMIC in process of revision of the Strategy with two sub-groups to develop strategies for the specific elements of mine risk education (MRE) and victim assistance. BHMIC is responsible for organization and unhindered passage of the overall process of revision of the Strategy.

The revision is based on a methodology, which includes definition of strategic and operational objectives; strategic analysis; determination of strategic options; strategic evaluation and selection and implementation of revised Strategy

Fundamentals of the special strategies developed for MRE and Victim Assistance are included in the overall analysis while the entire strategies will be produced as separate documents.

Strategic analysis with determination and selection of strategic options should be completed in the next few weeks, followed by government adoption procedure so we hope that this summer Bosnia and Herzegovina will have National Mine Action Strategy for the period 2004 - 2009. Consequently BH Mine Action Plan for next year will be obtained following the endorsement of the National Strategy document, enabling us to be ready well on time for the next demining season.

Clear, comprehensive, benchmarked and realistic document of National Mine Action Strategy for the next five years period is fully in compliance with timely and appropriate preparation for the Nairobi Summit. We are confident that this Strategy will offer clear view to us and to international Mine Action and donor community, where we are standing in this process, where we want to go and how we going to do it.

***Mr. Chairman,***

Bosnia and Herzegovina is fully committed to the aims of the Ottawa Convention and can be proud of what it has achieved so far in its Mine Action process which past through some very difficult but unavoidable post war stages to present state of determination and expertise with completely built up structures.

We are fully aware that there is still a lot to be done and we are determined to assure faster enhancement of overall Mine Action in years to come. Ongoing comprehensive process of Strategic planning side to side with constant improvement of Mine Action is firm confirmation of our determination.

This has been recognized by wide international mine ban community, international donors community, international organizations and NGOs and we hope for their continuous extensive support in years to come.

**Thank You**