



STATEMENT

*Of Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Victims' Assistance
13th Meeting of the State Parties to the APLC*

Geneva, 2-5 December 2013

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Mr. President, Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to add my voice to those thanking ambassador Kovačić of Slovenia for the outstanding stewardship of the 12th MSP, and to congratulate Algeria on taking over the Presidency. My delegation pledges its full support to the Chair.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully aligned itself with the general statement, as well as with the statement on Victims' Assistance, delivered by the EU. However, my delegation would like to make a few additional points regarding Victims' Assistance in a national capacity, since we are one of the most affected countries in Europe when it comes to the consequences of landmines and various others explosive remnants of war.

The total number of victims of landmines and explosive remnants of the war (ERW) up until this date is 8.305. In the past year, 13 persons were involved in landmine and ERW incidents, 3 of whom sustained fatal injuries. While the number of incidents and victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina is gradually decreasing, the number of children victims has increased. In the past year, 6 children were involved in mine accidents, and one of them sustained fatal injuries. In this regard, 2013 could be seen as a "year of children casualties" in landmine and ERW incidents, since the children were affected both directly and indirectly, having lost a parent or a close relative.

In order to undertake any activity in the area of VA, it is essential to establish a reliable and accurate database. That task is entrusted to the Department for Registration of Victims at the BiH Mine Action Centre (BIHMAC). The database was completed and uploaded in 2009, it has been regularly updated since, and the information on victims is accessible upon written request. As the result of the field missions of the BIHMAC teams and NGOs, this database was expanded in the past year with the data for 231 victims from the rural areas that have not been initially registered. The process of completing the Register of the victims is ongoing, and the data gathered so far is incomplete, containing mainly basic whereabouts of the victims. The data on social profile of the victims and of the assistance received in the past is still missing, therefore this database can hardly be used for the panning and analytical purposes.

The Council for Persons with Disabilities (PWD), as a national mechanism for the coordination of disability issues, was established in 2010. It does not include the landmine and ERW survivors' organizations, but it includes the representatives of War Veteran Associations and Civilian Victims of the War. It has its regular meetings of the Working Group in order to discuss all the relevant issues pertaining to the legal framework, programs and problems related to the VA. Since the achieved results have been declared insufficient, this body, in cooperation with NGO's representing victims, has completed the revision of the National Sub-strategy for VA for the period 2014-2019. The revised Sub-strategy has significantly improved the general approach to the problem of VA, proposed activities and programs that affect the victims of mines in particular, but also the persons with disabilities in general.

The government network of the institutions dealing with VA has been up-and-running for some time now, but the unfortunate fact is that, due to the complicated structure of the State, this network is largely fragmented and operates partially and mostly locally. The coordination, oversight and planning on the State level is still inadequate, which bares its consequences to the general strategy, future plans and estimated efficiency of the program for VA in general.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the CRPD in 2010. As part of the implementation activities, the Council of Persons with Disabilities has been established as an advisory body of the Council of Ministers, with the primary role to coordinate all the activities regarding the CRPD. Part of the activities in implementation of the CRPD goes through the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH. Other activities are directed through the Governments of Republika Srpska and Federation BiH. The capacity of the Council has been largely defined in the past two years through the project of the NGO specialized in VA. The project introduced the initiative to switch from ordering limb prosthetics bulk, based on the best price per unit, to making customized orders based on individual needs. In addition, as part of the same project, the Council, in collaboration with associations of victims, prepared the Report on implementation of the CRPD that was submitted to the UNHQ. The report emphasised the need to apply the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities regardless of the type and cause of the disability, which is adopted as common practice worldwide.

Entity Ministries for Health established network of Centers for physical rehabilitation and Centers for mental health in 64 municipalities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even though the established system needs an upgrade and expansion of the range of services, it has ensured the availability of basic rehabilitation services for the victims of landmines and ERW.

The NGO representing victims of mines and ERWs have made a great impact on rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into society. The number of projects realized through NGO is in steady decline, partly due to a decline in number of victims since the end of the war, partly due to a diminishing interest of the donor community. In the past year, only two NGO's were engaged in implementation of the reintegration projects, where the projects were financed by international donors. This is the opportunity to express our gratitude to the donors that financed or took part in projects of VA in our country.

Thank you for your attention.