



17th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 26 – 30 November 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

Thank you Madam President.

As this is the first time that the Delegation of the Republic of Croatia is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you and your able team for the extensive and excellent work that you have undertaken in preparing the 17th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (17MSP APMBC). I can assure you of my delegation's full support in your endeavor as the President of this Meeting and I am confident that under your competent stewardship this Meeting will be safely steered to a sound and successful outcome.

I also wish to thank all members of the Committees for their hard and effective work so far and finally, I take this opportunity to commend the work of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), its Director Mr. Juan Carlos Ruan and the entire staff on their job and services, and in particular, for continuing to serve as the good spirit of our Convention.

We were honored to serve in the Committee on Victim Assistance and would like to thank the Committee's Chairperson for conclusions and recommendations. We particularly see the value in further reinforcing cooperation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant human rights and disability actors and instruments.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Allow me now to inform this distinguished meeting about the current developments in the project "Demining and Socio-economic Integration" which is funded by Switzerland within the wider framework of the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation

Program. The total budget of the project is 3.5 million CHF out of which 3 million is Swiss contribution and 500.000 is national co-financing.

In short, the project consists of two complementary components, which represent two key pillars of mine action in general – humanitarian demining and victim assistance.

The first segment of the project - the demining of heavily mined and dangerous area of the Kotar Forest in the Sisak-Moslavina County (the second most mine-contaminated county in Croatia) is finished. The demining of Kotar Forest was a precondition to ensure safety and security of the civilian population in the area, as well as to restart full economic exploitation of the said forest.

Second, the program of socio-economic empowerment of mine victims will be carried out and implemented through the establishment of a comprehensive database and needs assessment of mine victims and direct support of mine victims through different programs that will help increase employability and competitiveness in the labor market. These activities will be implemented to the whole area of the Republic of Croatia that has been affected by the Homeland War.

The implementation of the project activities will last for 48 months. While the demining component was conducted rather quickly, the socio-economic empowerment will be conducted in the longer run due to the comprehensive approach that will be applied, involving a broader frame of actors in order to integrate victim assistance into structural frameworks, which will ensure assistance is being provided to people on the ground.¹

Furthermore, we are currently finalizing the “Questionnaire on Mine Victims” which will be used to conduct the survey among mine survivors and/or their family members. The interviews of mine victims, which will then be used to fill in the database, are foreseen to begin in the first quarter of 2019. At the same time, we are continuing with the development of the concept of victims’ database with particular attention to the requirement on how to deal with sensitive issues regarding the use of personal data.

Thank you.

¹ This network will include relevant ministries (health care, war veterans, social welfare etc.), as well as public institutions (ombudsman for persons with disabilities, national employment service, institute for public health, pension insurance institute etc.).