

Mr/Madam Vice-President, distinguished colleagues,

Let me at the outset thank the Co-Chairs for the hard work that they have put into the task that appears to be the most important short term goal of the Convention, and that is, the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under State Party jurisdiction or control. There is no need to enumerate the various humanitarian, developmental and socio-political consequences that these weapons bring into the every day life of mine affected countries and their people.

As we recall, the Nairobi Action Plan emphasized that, successfully meeting the deadlines for clearing mined areas according to Article 5 of the Convention, "will be the most significant challenge to be addressed in the coming five years and will require intensive efforts by mine-affected States Parties and those in position to assist them." We most certainly agree with this assessment.

In fact, guided by that idea, Croatia adopted its First National Mine Action Program back in 2000. That Program was revised in 2004 into the National Mine Action Plan 2005-2009, as we gained a better understanding of the magnitude and structure of the mine problem and the preconditions necessary for its solution. The 2004 revised version is currently before the Croatian Government and, we expect that by the end of this year, it will be sent to Parliament for consideration and adoption.

Allow me now to share with you the newest information regarding our efforts to demine our country. In 2005, the total mine suspected area in Croatia was estimated at 1,174 square kilometers of which some 12-15% is actually mined. Within that area, there are some 240,000 mines and some 60,000 unexploded ordnances still in the ground. Most of the mine suspected area is divided between woods (54% or 633.4 square kilometers), agricultural land (17.1 % or 201 square kilometer), underbrush (11.2% or 131.9 square kilometers), pastures and meadows (9.3% or 108.8 square kilometers) and the rest (6.6% or 77.6 square kilometers). It is important to stress that, from the beginning emphasis in demining in our country was placed on the populated areas, so that today mine suspect houses and yards account for only 1.1% or 13.2 kilometers square, and infrastructure 0.7% or 8.1 square kilometers. This year (between January 1 and November 1), some 22 square kilometers of mine suspected land was returned to the community; of this, some 15 square kilometers were declared mine free through the method of general survey (conducted in accordance with the applicable international standards), and some 7 square kilometers as result of demining.

In addition, another 8 square kilometers are in the process of being surveyed/demined and should be completed by the end of 2005.

Demining operations were carried out by 28 Croatian companies, of which 27 were commercial and one government owned (Mungos), as well as one NGO - Norwegian People's Aid. For this task we had 595 deminers, 53 demining machines and 123 mine-detection dogs. According to CROMAC, all relevant counties, municipalities and towns were provided with the necessary information, including maps, regarding the problems associated with living in mine suspected areas. In 2005, CROMAC continued to build up GIS (geo-information system) – a unique topographic data base - as a mechanism for the monitoring and development of all demining activities. Special thanks in that regard goes to the Kingdom of Norway which donated the scanning equipment necessary for the functioning of the GIS, and announced its readiness to further support this project.

Mr/Madame Vice president,

Let me conclude by providing some general information which will help us to obtain a clearer picture of the magnitude of the challenges that Croatia faces in its efforts to meet its 2009 deadline. The total funds necessary to implement the 2005-2009 National Mine Action Plan are estimated at 450 million euros and will be mostly collected from Croatian sources (state budget and public companies). According to the Plan, between 2005 and 2009, CROMAC will return yearly to the community some 60-75 square kilometers. As most of you already know, some 80-85% of the funds for demining in Croatia come from national sources. Our total amount spent on demining between 1998 and 2005 has been around 250 million euros. At the same time, the rough estimate of the resources necessary to complete the demining in Croatia (based on current information and prices) is about one and a half billion euros. This, just to give you a picture, is around 1/10 of the total yearly budget of the Government of Croatia. Accordingly, having in mind our strong commitment to the timely fulfillment of the goals set out in the Convention, we urge States Parties in a position to do so, to live up to their commitment as stated in Article 6. Similarly, we urge all mine affected States Parties in a position to do so, to live to their commitment as stated in Article 5.

We must not forget that it is a joint responsibility of mine free states and mine contaminated states alike – as states Parties to the Convention – to give as much as possible of their financial, technical and educational resources to rid our world of anti-personnel land mines. Only by accepting joint responsibility and by working in cooperation will we succeed.

Thank you