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Ninth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Geneva, 24-28 November 2008.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Presentation

of the request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of AP mines in accordance with Article 5. of the Convention

*Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,*

Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on 03. December 1997, and ratified it on 08. September 1998.

The Convention entered into force for Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 01. March 1999. Consequently, the deadline for completing the destruction of AP mines on the territory under our jurisdiction, in accordance with Article 5. of the Convention is 01. March 2009.

Although, Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been fully committed to the implementation of the Convention's aims and obligations as well as mutually agreed tasks given by subsequent progress reports and although we did substantial progress in our efforts to eradicate mine contamination during previous more than ten years of mine clearance efforts, we recognized that we will not be able to fulfill our obligations under Article 5. in given 10 years period.

Therefore, the Council of Ministers of BH, on 28 November 2006, made a decision to start the evaluation process of the overall Mine Action achievements in the past period, as well as preparation of new BH Mine Action Strategy for the period 2009-2019, with the idea that this new strategic document would also provide the basis for our extension request to the Convention.

Consequently, on March 26. 2008. Bosnia and Herzegovina officially submit, to the President of Eight Meeting of the States Parties, the request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of AP mines in accordance with Article 5. of the Convention, for the additional 10 years, namely until 01. March 2019.

On 14 April 2008, the President of 8MSP, extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina his and Group of Experts request for further clarification of the extension request on number of points. We responded, provided the detailed clarifications, and subsequently, as mutually agreed, on 27 June 2008, submitted to the President of 8MSP, a revised request for extension incorporating all additional information provided in response to the Presidents and the Group of Experts questions.

Mr. Chairman,

(SLIDE 1)

Origins of the Article 5 implementation challenge in Bosnia and Herzegovina date as a result of war operations during the period of the conflict 1992-1995. During that period, war parties placed an extensive number AP mines and minefields throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily between confrontation lines and around strategic facilities.

(SLIDE 2)

Efforts to release contaminated areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina started after the end of the conflicts, after signing the Dayton Peace Agreement at the end of 1995. In 1996, UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR), along with first emergency clearance efforts and information gathering efforts, established UN Mine Action Centre (UNMAC). The initial method used to identify minefields in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to use minefield records and information gathered from combatants. However, these information sources, though useful, have proven to be unreliable. First estimations of the scope of the problem disclose that there were 19057 available minefield records, and that this was only around 50-60% of real number, also that there were around 1 million of mines and that around 4.200 km² was mine suspected area which represented 8,2% of total state area.

In mid 1998, a local structure was established, comprised of the two entity mine action centers and one central Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMAL). In the first phase, the number of humanitarian demining organizations was increased, the first national mine action standards were issued and we included the provision of professional training. This greatly improved mine clearance performance that resulted in visible relaxation of general mine threat. Apart from mine clearance and removal of abandoned mines and UXOs, one of the main goals of mine action was to sharply reduce number of mine victims in which we significantly succeeded.

(SLIDE 3)

The adoption of the State Law on Demining in 2002, established unified state structure for mine action, BH Demining Commission and state level BHMAL, under the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The implementation of the Law significantly improved the functionality of the structure, along with quality assurance, cost-efficiency and effectiveness of the overall process.

During 2002 the first document of state Mine Action Strategy was produced for 2002-2009 and new general and systematic survey data identified 14000 minefield locations, with around 650 000 mines and 670 000 of UXOs on around 2765 km² of mine suspected area or 4,2% of total state area.

However, the mine action process continued to be impeded by an ever-present lack of funding for mine action, especially for humanitarian demining operations.

(SLIDE 4)

During 2003-2004, a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was carried out in accordance with international standards, revealing the size of the mine problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on existing level of mine threat.

LIS results revealed that 1366 communities at that time were mine affected with 1,375,807 residents, which represented almost a quarter of total population. On the slide you can see number of communities in accordance with respective level of mine threat.

(SLIDE 5)

During 2005-2006, BH Mine Action Centre, following LIS results and conclusions, has done a new general assessment of mine situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This exercise included integrated update of LIS data and systematic survey results and produced clearer picture of the size and nature of the mine threat in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These new assessments in 2007 determined the presence of 220,000 abandoned mines and other explosive remnants of war on 1755 km² of suspected area and with estimated 13077 minefield locations. This integrated update exercise outputs also enable BHMIC to get comprehensive data on impacted communities per administrative regions; List of municipalities according to the level of impact; full register of all impacted communities and updated maps of mine situation on the level of each community

(SLIDE 6)

During the period 1998-2007, a total of 2,445 square kilometers of suspected area in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been released through systematic, general and technical survey and mine clearance. Namely:

2139 km² - released through systematic survey

220, 5 km²- released through general survey

85.5 km² - mine clearance and technical survey operations

At the end of 2007, the size of suspect area in Bosnia and Herzegovina amounted to 1,755 square kilometers, or 3.42 percent of the total state territory.

Main impediments causing our noncompliance under article 5. during first 10-years period are:

- Great extent of mine contamination in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Lack of sufficient financial resources necessary for humanitarian demining operations
- Non-existence of up to 35 % and further non-accuracy of up to 25 % of existing minefield records
- Climate conditions, which directly influence length of the annual demining season. Which, in best cases, lasts from March until November.
- Minefields with small number of mines (usually groups of mines or individual mines placed randomly with no obvious patterns.
- Minefields exist throughout the country (karst in the south and southwest, mountainous and ravine areas of central BH and plain areas on the north of BH; and with very different types of vegetation (rocks, bushes, high grass, and forests). These conditions ask for different methods of mine clearance and impede more rapid and effective clearance of mines.)

(SLIDE 7)

Regarding the funding of mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina the majority of funds were allocated by international donors. During the period from 2002 up to today, there were around 142,6 million Euros in total spent on mine action projects. (This includes projections for 2008) Up to 60% was donated and the rest was financed through local budgets and legal entities.

(SLIDE 8)

In the period, 1996-2007 there were 1628 mine casualties, out of these, 468 persons were killed in mine accidents. As visible from the above chart, number of mine victims is constantly in decrease since the beginning of mine action process. In the first 10 months of 2008 we had 12 mine accidents with 29 new mine victims and 14 of them were killed by mine.

(SLIDE 9)

Available capacities for mine clearance and technical survey today are as follows:

There are 37 accredited demining organizations and 2 monitoring agencies
Five under government financing (Armed forces, Civil Protections, MDDC)
16 NGOs and 16 commercial companies

Total assets in terms of mine clearance equipment is shown on this slide and there are more than 2000 accredited deminers in BH

These operational capacities, including expert capacities of BHMACH survey, inspecting, monitoring an administrative staff, are capable to reach annual productivity of estimated 35-40 km² of mine clearance and technical survey. These productivity levels are one of the basic fundamentals of our strategic planning and projections for future period of requested extension under the Convention

(SLIDE 10)

Having in mind that preparation for our extension request started in 2007 and that our MA Strategy for period of requested extension have been prepared and endorsed by the Council of ministers of BH at the beginning of this year, consequently year 2008 has been foreseen as transitional year during which we had to prepare all the necessary basis for immediate implementation of our strategic MA plans and annual plans for the next period.

Therefore, during this year we were engaged in technical and legislative preparation for implementation of new MA Strategy for period 2009-2019 and preparation and procedural matters for additional state budget financing for mine clearance on the level of around 15 million Euros annually from 2009 onwards.

The MA operational plan for 2008 call for further release of suspected area for additional 182 km² and I am pleased to say that according to this year's mid-term reports we are well on the way to achieve this target. With this additional release at the early 2009, mine suspected area would be in total around 1573 km²

(SLIDE 11)

Therefore, BH mine contamination data, at the beginning of 2009, are as follows

- Around 13.000 of suspected minefield locations
- 592 km² of risk divided into different categories of threat level as shown on slide
- I category 88 km² number of locations= 3214
- II category 221 km² number of locations= 4201
- III category : 283 km² number of locations = 5662

(SLIDE 12)

Mr. Chairman,

Having all this in mind, our detailed plan for the period of the requested extension is contained in our essential document "Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Strategy 2009-2019" and is based on three main premises

(SLIDE 13)

- First - to support future full achievement of convention's aims and obligations (VISION AND MISSION)
- Second - to serve as realistic basis for the continuity and strategic progress of mine action in future period and
- Third - to ensure stable and continuous funding for mine action as insufficient funding could continue to undermine our efforts in future.

(SLIDE 14)

In order to accomplish our aims for next 10 years period it is essential to achieve annual operational levels of mine clearance and technical survey operations of around 31 million m², as foreseen in the Strategy. Since present operational capacities already allow for this amount of operations this means that we have to achieve our annual targets in financial aspects to manage the subsequent annual operational plans.

Suspected area shall be released, progressively as shown on this slide:

- I and II category of priority shall be released through the operations of general and technical survey and mine clearance with continuous conduct of prevention measures through prohibition measures, urgent and permanent marking and mine risk education;
- III category of priority risk areas will be immediately treated by prohibition measures, urgent and permanent marking and with directed mine risk education.

This approach represents higher level of prevention than the permanent marking. Conduct with these areas will be determined through respective legal instruments imposing restrictive measures through which mine action, police and local authorities will be involved in the identification, control, notification, and maintenance of physical barriers and warnings over these areas. Specific revision of the situation and development of operational plans for release of these areas through specific release methods with foreseen implementation of newly developed MC technology and standards will be conducted until first revision of our strategic plan, which will take place in 2012.

(SLIDE 15)

Necessary funds for implementation of operational plans for the period 2009-2019 are estimated on level of around 40 million Euros annually. In accordance with these strategic aims, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in process of endorsing this new document of Mine Action Strategy for 2009-2019, took commitment to significantly increase state budgets for mine clearance in next and following years. The Ministry of Finance of Bosnia and Herzegovina has already supported this decision through projections for state budget for 2009, involving additional funds covering for foreseen shortfalls on the level of around 15 million Euros annually.

Even with drastically increased local funding we will still partly rely on support of donor community on levels of around 10-15 million Euros until 2012 and than we foresee gradual fading out of donor financing on around 2, 5 million Euros in 2019.

Total estimated financial means for the implementation of all strategic and operational plans in next 10 years period amounts to around 400 million Euros of which we estimate for at least 75 million Euros from external donor funds.

(SLIDE 16)

Basic premises of our approach to mine clearance planning for period of requested extension

- Further strengthening of state MA structures on all levels
- Additional state funding for implementation of our strategic and annual MC plans on levels of 15 Million Euro annually)
- Concretization of MA implementation mechanisms – Strategy, Annual Operational Plans, annual monitoring plans with foreseen periodic revisions
- Further improvement of overall MA planning, coordination and quality insurance including status of operational staff
- Increasing safety of all through criminalization of risk behavior including demining agencies, deminers and citizens)
- Creation of conditions for future compliance with Convention obligations.
- Continuation of compliance with International Mine Action Standards and further development of release methods and mine clearance techniques
- Creation of additional incentive for donor support

(SLIDE 17)

Fulfillment of foreseen tasks, especially realization of planned levels of funding will enable us to complete our work and our obligation under Article 5. of the Convention during the requested extension period.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina express once again its full support and appreciation to the efforts of the Presidency, the States chairing and co-chairing this committee, the Group of experts and the ISU, on support and expertise they provided through past period of preparation, analysis and inquiring our extension request.

Our joint efforts resulted in transparent and realistic exchange of information and timely finalization of our extension request in compliance with Article 5. of the Convention.

We reconfirm our willingness and readiness to extend, if asked for in further proceedings, any additional information concerning our extension request, in order to make this process as efficient and transparent as possible.

Thank you