

OPENING SPEECH

Sarajevo, 18.-19. oktobar 2018

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to be here with you, and be part of this remarkable group.

Thank you to the European Union, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Mine Action Centre and the Convention Implementation Support Unit for inviting me to this national dialogue.

I highly appreciate that I have been asked to address you today. It is not every day that I am asked to speak to those who are responsible for clearing mines, or to speak to those who hold a political card to make clearing mines possible in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

For that opportunity I am very grateful.

You see, Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of the first countries in the world, to join the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines in 1998.

At that time, we were a country devastated by these awful weapons.

Many saw the terrible consequences of landmines in our country. One of them is Princess Diana. She visited Bosnia-Herzegovina and brought the world's attention to our plight.

That was 20 years ago.

Do you know what else happened 20 years ago? I was nearly killed by a landmine.

I was a child, spending a day in the country side with my cousin, not far from Sarajevo.

That day ended tragically with both of us falling victim to a weapon of a war that had finished but was still causing victims.

My life since then has been a roller coaster.

Thanks to family and friends, I have become the woman I want to be, but I am not yet **where** I want to be. I am unemployed today.

Life with a disability is harder than for the rest. We face barriers in education and employment. Even in provision of health care.

We face discrimination every single day.

- My life may not be perfect and yes, it has been difficult... but it is better than the lives of many survivors. Remember that there are many survivors today that still need support, so while you are taking out the landmines and destroying them, making sure that people can walk freely and use the land, please do not forget that the needs of victims will stay the same.

We need to do something about it.

First, doing what you promised to do: clean all contamination under your jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, and assisting the victims and survivors of landmines.

When you talk these next two days, please remember that your words here have meaning somewhere else.

What you say here. The decisions you make. The promises you make.... All that affects someone else, somewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Our resources in Bosnia-Herzegovina are limited. We need to do a good job at managing resources so that we can finish the job within our deadline.

Landmines might not be in the center of Sarajevo... but they are all around our beautiful country.

I invite you to really commit to clean Bosnia-Herzegovina of all known landmines.

Do your best to survey, to find them, to clear them, to destroy them. But also.... Do your best to provide for the care and rehabilitation of those injured by landmines as mandated under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

I hope that if you are here today is because you care about making BiH free of these weapons.

So, I invite you to take things forward... let's take BiH to join the right side of history.

Let's remind the world that 20 years on, these dangerous mines, are still taking our lives and our livelihoods.

I don't want anyone to lose their jobs, but, how nice would it be if we could say that we no longer live in fear of landmines. If we could walk anywhere we wanted to without fear of being killed? How wonderful would it be to meet our deadline and declare Bosnia-Herzegovina free of anti-personnel mines?

Thank you