

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is, unfortunately, still the most mine affected country in Europe, with 1,018 km² (or roughly 2% of the total size of the country), contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war.

The landmine problem directly impacts 545 thousand inhabitants or 15% of total country population.

After the war, there were 1758 mine casualties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 614 of which were fatal.

But there is also good news:

Bosnia and Herzegovina has succeed in clearing more than 2/3 of its suspected hazardous areas - from 4200km² in 1996 to a little over 1000km² today.

We have also strengthened our national mine action resources. A prime example of this is the fact that the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina account for 20-25% of total annual demining results.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is also successfully implementing a new mine action methodology in regards to Land Release - a method that has already proven to be effective. This is something called "evidence based survey" in the United States, and as a matter of fact, the first successful land release project in Bosnia and Herzegovina was US funded.

In October 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a National Mine Action Stakeholder Dialogue, with the main goal to bring stakeholders together to identify challenges and accelerate actions to implement the mine clearance aspects of the 2014-2019 Maputo Action Plan. The Conference was used to present donors with the new mine action plan and Strategy - Bosnia and Herzegovina free of mines by 2025, which was drafted with assistance from the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has also started implementing a Country Assessment project of mine suspected areas. The project objective is to increase efficiency of Land Release through improved Country Assessment of the size and impact of mines/explosive remnants of war contamination. Implementing partners of the project are Norwegian People's Aid, BHMACH and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As you may be aware, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made an Article V extension request, in regards to fulfilling its obligations - a two year extension - with the goal of implementing the Country Assessment by mid-2020, when BHMIC will be in a better position to plan fulfillment its Convention obligations.

Some challenges that Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing:

1. Funding related issues:

The BHMIC has calculated that the implementation of the new strategy to make our country landmine free by 2025, requires an amount of 336 millions of Bosnia Marks or 197 million USD. Bosnia and Herzegovina is doing as much as it can, and the ratio of local vs. donor funding is about 50%/50%.

2. Upgrade of the information management system

Update to the BHMIC mine action information system is supposed to happen in parallel with the country assessment program, in order to ensure the integrity of the new data collected through the project.

3. Revision of prioritization procedures

Following the country assessment project, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center will have to revise its prioritization procedures.

Finally, I do want to take a moment to express our most sincere gratitude for all of your assistance and cooperation and I very much hope that you will continue supporting us in our endeavor of becoming a mine free country.