

ITF statement at MASG, 17 February 2015

Allow me to extend a warm welcome to all of you at Mine Action Support Group in the name of ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) from Slovenia.

The legacy of landmines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) is still one of the biggest destabilization factors in the world. There are over 60 countries, that deal with this problem on a daily basis and which prevents people to live normal lives since they are in constant fear of working in fields, going to work and school. Every step in the suspected area can cause a tragedy for them and their families.

The landmine threat was again exposed with the May 2014 floods in the region of South East Europe, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as within the latest conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.

With recognizing and addressing the importance of this problem, ITF, as a non-profit organization with the initial aim of helping Bosnia and Herzegovina in its efforts to address landmine problem was established by Slovenian Government in 1998. Since its inception, ITF has been continuously developing and enhancing its mission thus expanding the scope of activities and geographic area of their implementation to reflect the changing human security environment, needs of beneficiary countries and priorities of donor community. Altogether ITF has organized the clearance of over 129 million square meters of land, facilitated the treatment of more than 1,200 mine/ERW survivors and supported the development of national and local rehabilitation capacities in 12 mine-affected countries. None of this would have been possible without the generous assistance of ITF donors: 29 countries, European Union, UN agencies, OPEC Fund for International Development, local authorities in affected countries and numerous other public and private donors that have altogether allocated more than 384 million US dollars for ITF activities.

ITF has just recently adopted the new Strategy for period 2015-2020 where the mine action concept of human security and regional cooperation remain its strong component, being an important confidence-building measure, particularly in countries emerging from conflict. The mission of ITF is to enhance safety as well as to enable the recovery and development of conflict affected countries by addressing the immediate and long-term impact of mine/ERW and other hazards following armed violence. A human security approach is applied to all of the ITF`s interventions as it enables a dynamic and practical policy framework for addressing widespread and crosscutting threats. This human security approach supports the linkages between humanitarian mine action and surplus arms reduction, as well as nexus between security and development. It also supports the development of essential preconditions, capabilities and capacities that pave the way to comprehensive development, and full national ownership and accountability in conflict affected countries.

The 2015 – 2020 ITF strategy has been introduced to recognize and implement the unique advantages, capabilities and experience of the ITF across the spectrum of post-conflict recovery (including but not limited to, humanitarian mine action and conventional weapons destruction (CWD)) such as: transparent and cost-efficient management and accounting, professionalism and integrity, coordination and collaboration of different stakeholders with focus on capacity building, strengthening of national ownership and regional cooperation, exchange of knowledge and best-practices, and quality procurement system. Donors` demand for better development outcomes of humanitarian mine action and the constant changing security environment inspire ITF to use and apply mine action methods, approaches and lessons learned to a broader set of activities, integrating mine action into broader development and human security framework.

Humanitarian mine action and other forms of post-conflict assistance are proven contributors to human security and development, however there is opportunity for translating the close relationship between such assistance and reconstruction, as well as development efforts into more concrete inter-linked approaches and programs,

broadening the areas of intervention. There is room for more and better all-encompassing coordination and collaboration between not only humanitarian mine action and CWD stakeholders, but also with other relevant developmental governmental and civil society actors, thus increasing efficiency, effectiveness and most importantly a positive impact on conflict affected communities, specifically, thus increasing safety, socio-economic development and community empowerment, ensuring that their right to a peaceful and dignified life is met. The human security approach is about changing the traditional, more technical, funnel-like mode of assistance thinking, and further mainstreaming of mine action and CWD issues into broader humanitarian, development and human rights issues, thus linking the holistic approach in mine action and CWD more effectively with development initiatives.

The human security approach creates a framework that reflects the complexity of humanitarian and development interventions, and the crosscutting linkages and challenges encountered on the way to reaching the goal of mine/ERW impact free or CWD-completed country. It is a reminder of the impact of the legacy of war legacy on people and enables ITF to focus on efforts to not only save lives and limbs, but to build resilience and empower conflict affected communities. By applying a people-centered perspective, which is the central pillar of human security, it becomes self-evident that humanitarian mine action and CWD is not just about clearance of ERW, risk awareness, or of stockpile destruction, as the impact of mines/ERW and deteriorating and illicit munitions touches upon all faces of human security – health, personal security, livelihood, peace and the environment. Thus the ITF will extend its scope of work beyond clearance and CWD and will address the development phase of communities that have emerged from war.

Thank you.

