

Bosnia

BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA
Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova



БОСНА И ХЕРЦЕГОВИНА
Министарство иностраних послова

STATEMENT

Of Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Third Review Conference of the State Parties to the APLC
Maputo, Mozambique

Maputo 23-27 June 2014

Mr. President, Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to add my voice to those congratulating Mozambique for assuming the Presidency of the Third Review Conference of the State Parties to the APLC. The road from Nairobi, to Cartagena and now, fifteen years after the First Conference again to Maputo has been steep and winding, but thanks to the tireless efforts of the former Presidencies, State Parties, International Organizations, NGOS, donors and humanitarian workers, great part of it has been paved with success. Those countries who declared their territories free of landmines should rightfully be proud of their achievements. But there is still a number of countries where these hellish devices are still taking human lives, or changing them in the most horrible way. Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to that group.

Twenty years after the war and sixteen years after becoming a State party to the APLC, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still one of the most mine contaminated countries in the world and the most contaminated country in the region. Size of mine suspect area at the beginning of this year was 1220 km², which is approximately 2.4% of the country's territory. BiH is fully committed to fulfil all the obligations from the APLC and we engaged all the relevant state institutions to that end. The Mine Action Strategy, that has been developed, adopted by the relevant institutions and regularly reviewed, entails Bosnia and Herzegovina free of landmines by the end of 2019, which is in line with the extension granted by the APLC five years ago. From December 2012 to December 2013, 40 km² of the land in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been released. Reduction of the remaining mine suspected area planned for the period 2013 - 2019 is expected to continue at the current, or even higher rate, but that will largely depend on allocated local resources and donor funds.

Unfortunately, as most of you know, in May this year Bosnia and Herzegovina has suffered a natural catastrophe of Biblical proportions: one third of the Country was flooded, 950.000 people were affected, 100.000 homes have been destroyed, 230 schools and hospitals, two dozen people lost their lives. The floods have caused more than 560 landslides. Seventy percent of the flooded land is in mine suspected areas, and 51 landslides that occurred in these areas so far caused floating of the minefields and dislocation of the landmines. Several incidents have been recorded up to date, fortunately with no casualties, three incidents in District of Brcko involved the world most infamous PROM mines. Various

International organizations, including NATO, UNMAS, GICHD and others have immediately offered their assistance, and their teams are in the field assessing the situation as we speak.

Since every cloud has a silver lining, this new state of emergency can give us an additional boost to use this momentum and speed up the clearance process. The rate of mine clearance before the floods was between 11-12km² a year. The forthcoming donor conference for the flood victims in BiH and Serbia will be an opportunity to the donor community to express its humanity and generosity in the area of mine clearance as well, resulting in the increased rate of the mine clearance and land release to a point that will bring the completion of the process as close as possible to the planned deadline.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully aligned itself with the statement on Victims' Assistance, delivered by the EU. My delegation would just like to emphasise the need to attach additional importance to the section of the Convention dealing with Victim's assistance, whether through an institute of a Special Envoy and a Committee on Victims Assistance, by expanding the role of Coordinators, increasing the involvement of the Civil Society, or any other way that the membership deems fit. My country has a great number of victims whose livelihood significantly improved since the APLC brought it in focus of the wider World Community.

As to the stockpile destruction, Number of retained stockpiled mines for training purposes fits the number of polygons for training and testing capacities of companies and the Mine Action Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Last, but not least, my country would like to add its voice, whatever it's worth, to those advocating the need for speeding up the universalisation of the Convention. Some of the World's most affected and mine infested countries are still not among the membership. The need to adhere to the principles of the Convention should be universally accepted, regardless of the old grievances and so called "legitimate security concerns", as we all want to live the day to see the World free of landmines.

Thank you for your attention.