



STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE

CCW Protocol V Meeting of Experts Geneva, 7 April 2015

Mr. Coordinator, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the delegation of Croatia I would like to express our pleasure at participating in the work of this year's Protocol V MoE. In our effort to ensure that adequate measures for the provision of assistance to ERW and UXO victims are being taken, we can report on the following.

General Overview

Currently in Croatia, the locus of assistance for mine victims resides within the larger context of general disability issues. Although there is no reliable database or needs assessment study on mine victims in Croatia, according to the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) some 1.900 people are estimated as direct victims who have survived (another 400 to 450 who were killed) and some 20.000 are closest family members.

Government Office for Mine Action

In 2012 Croatian Government established Office for Mine Action as a governmental body in charge of expert, analytical, counseling, coordinative and other activities regarding the mine action in Croatia. As such, the Office also monitors the work, activities and operations of the Croatian Mine Action Center. One of the Office's main goals is to raise the awareness of general population about the dangers of mines and UXOs as well as to create the adequate conditions for the development of mine action in Croatia.

As mine clearance and victim assistance are two parts of the same coin (which by the humanitarian security Conventions they are), the Government office for Mine Action has consistently worked on both fronts. In addition to being involved in analysis, coordination, advocacy and other activities related to mine action the Government Office for Mine Action is actively engaged in the development of the Croatian EU funding policy, through the creation of Operational Programmes for the financial perspective 2014-2020 for the usage of EU funds.

Coordination and Planning

The National Coordinating Body for Mine and UXO Victims was established in 2010 based on recommendations from Cartagena Action Plan (CAP) and Vientiane Action Plan (VAP), as well as on obligations from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Its main task was drafting the National Action Plan for Mine and UXO Victims 2010 - 2014 and overall coordination of victim assistance system in Croatia.

New Law on Mine Action

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior and coordinated by the Office for Mine Action, a Working Group comprising all key actors in Croatian mine action system (MoD, CROMAC, unions' and employers' associations active in humanitarian demining) drafted the Law on Mine Action which is currently being prepared for the parliamentary procedure. This new Law will regulate not only humanitarian demining, which is just one segment of mine action, but will include all activities which have not been so far sufficiently regulated by the current Law. In this part the emphasis is primarily on assistance to mine victims and on their socio-economic rehabilitation and integration as well as mine risk education. The novelty is the obligation of running a data base on mine victims and their family members with the aim of providing systematic assistance adapted to age and gender.

Database of mine/cluster munition/ERW victims

Establishment of a comprehensive mines/cluster munition/ERW Victims' Database is a precondition for determining the specific individual needs of mine victims in Croatia. The field visits and interviews with mine victims as well as with other stakeholders will be conducted using structured questionnaires so that a comprehensive picture of both the individual needs and overall requirements can be obtained and assessed.

Croatia and CRPD

Croatia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and accordingly adopted National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2007 – 2015. Focal point for the CRPD is Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. Office for adults and persons with disabilities is an administrative organization within the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth which co-ordinates implementation of the national policy for persons with disabilities and implementation of the CRPD.

Croatia's Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities' role is more to advocate, propose measures, make recommendations, inform and to report on actions taken. The Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities in its latest report informed on the difficulties in the provision of necessary services to people with disabilities and children with disabilities. Although the changes to ensure accessibility for PwDs are continuing, they are not developing in accordance with the set plans.

NGO Activities and Survivor Inclusion

Survivors and their representative organizations collaborated in preparing national reports for both OTW and CCM as well the CCW. NGO representatives were also contacted by the government officials to discuss/offer their views on the planned national statements. But survivors did not participate as members of the government delegation to international meetings.

NGO dealing with victim assistance programs in general reported decrease of the services and number of people they could assist due to the omnipresent lack of financial resources. Some NGOs still managed to provide psychological support groups for adults and children; visits by social workers to implement tailored, individual plans for improving health, education or social inclusion and financial assistance. Some started with activities such as psychosocial rehabilitation of mine survivors and their families. These activities entailed workshops for survivors including children (these individuals were then mixed with people from marginalized social groups).

ERW Risk Education

ERW risk education programs for elementary school students, farmers, hunters, mountain servicemen etc. were conducted in different regions of Croatia by the experts from the Croatian Mine Action Centre, Croatian red Cross and Ministry of Interior. Comprehensive ERW risk education along with the precise marking of the mine and mine suspected areas greatly contributed to the reduced number of victims in the last few years.

Thank you Mr. Coordinator.

