

FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE  
STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION  
ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE,  
STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND  
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES  
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

1 December 2004

ENGLISH ONLY

Nairobi, 29 November – 3 December 2004

**MINE-FREE REGIONS INITIATIVE:  
THE EXAMPLE OF MINE FREE SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE BY 2009<sup>1/2/</sup>**

Prepared by Slovenia

**SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**

South-Eastern Europe (SEE) is still one of the seriously mine-affected regions in the world. Mine contamination degrades the basic fabric of socio-economic development and the quality of life, impeding the return of refugees, agricultural output and access to transportation, revitalization of production and trade, and improvement of living conditions. Especially in the border regions, mines are a major obstacle to effective border management, which in the end could make trafficking and illegal border trespassing easier.

All countries in the region are actively participating in the Mine Action activities. They take full, or at least partial, ownership of funding of the Mine Action structures.

All countries in the region are parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction, which requires them to destroy all anti-personnel mines (APMs) in mined areas and to provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims as well as assistance for mine awareness programmes.

Notable progress has been made in the SEE, but the unforeseen complexity of removing landmines has given the impression that demining might never come to an end. Donors are asking for firm timetables regarding the full completion of demining activities.

---

<sup>1/</sup> **This document is reproduced without editing, as received by the Secretariat.**

<sup>2/</sup> **At the request of the States Parties of the First Review Conference, this document is reproduced in a revised version.**

*A group of countries involved in the mine-action activities in the region of SEE (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia) and the European Commission believe that now is the time to set a precedent and to assess by when countries and the region as a whole can actually be declared mine-free. This would include assessment in both technical and organizational terms as well as a bottom-line investment requirement. The result could give donors the motivation required to continue funding of the Mine Action programmes in the region.*

## **DEALING WITH THE MINE PROBLEM IN SEE**

### **1. Stockpile destruction**

Stockpile destruction is an important factor in building confidence between the neighbouring countries. Except for Serbia and Montenegro, all countries in the region have completed their stockpile destruction:

- Albania (April 2002) with the help of NATO and its Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP),
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (November 1999) with the help of SFOR,
- Croatia (October 2002),
- Macedonia (February 2003),
- Serbia and Montenegro declared possession of a stockpile of around 1.3 million APMs to be destroyed by the end of the time-limit set in the Convention (2008), or earlier in case of major donor assistance (until 2007). This assistance is forthcoming for 2005.

### **2. Mine clearance**

There are more than 1.6 million mines and unexploded ordnances (UXO) still buried in the ground in SEE:

- With continuing and sufficient donor support, Albania could be mine-free by 2005;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia are the most contaminated countries in the region and are expected to be mine-free by the end of the decade provided that the donations increase;
- Macedonia is planning to declare itself mine-free in 2004;
- Serbia and Montenegro with continuing and appropriate assistance from donors could be fully cleared of mines even before the expiration of ten year deadline set by the Convention (2014), or at best by the end of the decade.

All countries have sufficient in-country capacity for mine clearance. The following countries have also established regional capacities for mine clearance as a result of regional cooperation initiated by countries' MACs and strengthened through SEEMACC (more information under Item 5 – Regional cooperation):

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mine Detection Dog Centre in Konjic;
- Croatia: CROMAC - Centre for Testing, Development and Training Ltd.;
- Serbia and Montenegro: Regional Centre for Underwater Demining in Bijela, Demining Center of Serbia in Belgrade.

*There are more than 80 mine clearance organisations accredited in SEE; additional capacity for mine clearance is therefore not required as in most countries the capacities are actually underused due to lack of donor funds. Therefore, the funds should be ensured for the existing capacities to be used to the fullest extent possible.*

### **3. Mine Victims Assistance (MVA)**

New mine/UXO casualties continue to be reported in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, adding to the number of more than 7,000 mine survivors in the region. Landmine survivors will be requiring specialized care in health, rehabilitation and reintegration for the rest of their lives.

As the importance of treating patients in their own country becomes ever more obvious, the main focus of mine victims assistance is shifting to capacity-building and sustainability of the in-country programmes, particularly in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, the treatment of landmine survivors needs to continue after the initial physical rehabilitation, with longer-range psycho-social rehabilitation.

*Assistance to landmine survivors needs to be viewed as part of a country's overall public health and social services system. Within those general systems, deliberate care must be taken to ensure that landmine survivors receive the same opportunities in life – in health care, social services, life-sustaining incomes, education and participation in the community – as the general population.*

### **4. Awareness-raising**

Although awareness-raising of the dangers posed by mines and UXOs takes place in all countries of the region in a more or less organised and consistent manner (and has contributed to the considerable drop in the number of mine victims per year), mine risk education programmes need to be integrated into school curricula. The awareness-raising programmes must constantly undergo evaluation and be adjusted accordingly.

*These programmes must continue at all levels of society in the mine affected countries in order to prevent future accidents when most of the mines will have been cleared.*

## **MAIN INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR DEALING WITH THE MINE PROBLEM IN SEE**

### **1. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

The UN was the first organization that responded to the mine problem in SEE. The UNDP has leveraged and delivered more than \$226 million in SEE since 1998 to address the development challenges, prevent renewed instability and assist the countries on their path towards the EU. The UNDP's programmes have included post-conflict income generation and micro-credit programmes;

area-based development initiatives to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; public administration and civil service reform programmes to foster effective governance; strategies to localize the Millennium Development Goals to bring the development process into the hands of the people; youth programmes to foster confidence in the future; support to small and medium-sized enterprises; and efforts to promote foreign direct investments into the countries and to the region as a whole. The UNDP is now working with the countries to achieve the goals established by the EU and the Stability Pact for SEE through greater cooperation between them on issues related to small arms reduction, local governance, border communities, and economic growth.

## **2. International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF)**

The ITF is primarily involved in raising and leveraging money for mine clearance and mine victims assistance. A special emphasis in the work of the ITF is given to training, regional cooperation and building of the Geographical Information System (GIS) for SEE. In six years the ITF has developed into the main regional actor in Mine Action. 33 companies, organizations and individuals, 24 countries and the European Union have to date contributed funds to the ITF. By August 2004, the ITF raised or leveraged more than 150 million USD.

Since the ITF's inception in 1998 and with the help of ITF donors, more than 30 different companies and 8 NGOs have cleared more than 46 million square meters of land in the SEE region. Through the rehabilitation programmes funded by ITF donors more than 850 mine/UXO victims were treated at the Institute for Rehabilitation in the Republic of Slovenia and rehabilitation centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **3. United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)**

UNMAS is a part of the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations. It was established in October 1997 to serve as the focal point for mine action within the UN system. It coordinated mine clearance operations in SEE except for Croatia which coordinated its own clearance operations.

## **4. South Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC)**

In December 2000, the cooperation between the established Mine Action centres in the SEE, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMACE), Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMACE) and Albanian Mine Action Executive was formalized in the form of the South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC). In 2002, the Mine Action Centre of Serbia and Montenegro as well as Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action also joined (at their own request). Within SEEMACC, UNMIK and Macedonia have become observers in 2003.

## **5. Reay Group**

Recognizing the need for greater coordination and cooperation among the mined countries of the SEE, a number of countries led by Canada and Croatia and supported by the ITF, formed in September 2000 in Geneva the Forum for Cooperation on Mine Action in South East Europe, later

renamed the Reay Group. The goal of the Reay Group was to help transform the mine-affected states into responsible partners or actors in their own destiny, while ensuring that donor funds be used where most needed and in the most judicious manner.

Over the past four years, the core members of the Reay Group have worked to identify regional priorities as well as gaps in the existing programmes and to develop relevant projects in these priority areas... Working within the Stability Pact framework via e-mail or in side-meetings held during regular meetings of the Standing Committees of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction, the Reay Group sought to provide the maximum added value. The Group identified as the first three priority areas: stockpile destruction (successfully completed in all SEE countries except for Serbia and Montenegro), test and evaluation of new technologies, and training of personnel in regional MACs. As these tasks were nearing completion or were successfully completed, mine victim rehabilitation and reintegration was added as a new priority.

## **REGIONAL APPROACH**

There are several advantages of a regional approach:

- A regional approach builds confidence among the countries in the region and is an effective contribution to its stabilization;
- The regional pooling of resources, especially of more expensive technologies, can contribute to lowering the costs of the programmes;
- The mutually acknowledged accreditation of mechanical equipment contributes to avoiding high cost of testing and accreditation procedures;
- Training in specific areas (e.g. management etc.) avoids duplication and minimizes required funding.
- Donors can rely on a transparent, effective structure to coordinate mine action support.

*The existing forms of regional capacities for dealing with the mine problem in SEE should be strengthened.*

## **DECLARING SEE A MINE-FREE REGION**

In order to ensure that the SEE be freed of all mines by 2009, a group of countries involved in the mine-action activities in the region of SEE (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia) and the European Commission has proposed the following course of action:

1. The use of a realistic information base on mine-contamination and victim assistance is crucial. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that mine-affected countries present to the international donor community realistic strategies based on real resources
2. Mine-affected countries should clearly state their own participation in funding of mine related activities. Only on this basis a continuous or potentially increased international assistance can

be envisaged. The donor community needs a clearly defined time frame and a clearly specified amount of resources required to resolve the mine problem. In this way donors could recognize the involvement and activities of the governments that would increase the effect of their donation facilitating foreseeable long-term funding.

3. The First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction (the Nairobi Summit) could encourage the donor community to help achieve this goal in the context of a wider Mine Free Regions Initiative.
4. The way towards the mine free SEE in specific affected countries:

Albania:

- The strategic objective of the Albanian Mine Action Programme is to render Albania free from the effect of mines and unexploded ordinance by December 2005 (depending on the availability of funds). This means that high and medium priority areas should be cleared by that time the majority of high impact areas being cleared already in 2004.
- There should be a clear commitment of the Albanian Government that they will take over the funding of the programme after 2005.
- The national legislation for mine action should be adopted.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- The new strategy is finished.
- There is a plan to increase Government donations for demining. Local communities will participate more in the demining with financial contributions. In 2003 local communities donated 12 million Convertible Marks.
- The Mine Action Plan is implanted in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was approved by the World Bank.
- There are several improvements in the last few years: more technical survey (cheaper than demining), merger of 3 MACs to one BHMAL and increasing of Governmental funding of demining.

Croatia:

- The new strategy is finished and foresees the solution to the mine problem by 2009.
- The new strategy continues to rely mostly on domestic financial resources.

Serbia and Montenegro:

- In line with the provisions of the Constitutional Charter of the state union Serbia and Montenegro, there is a need for the relevant Ministries and other authorities to coordinate efforts in connection with the implementation of the Convention.
- Cluster bombs remain big issue and are contaminating agricultural territory. It requires significant domestic resources for cleaning up the territory.

- Taking into account that Serbia and Montenegro's obligations under the Convention began on 1 March 2004, it is noted that Serbia and Montenegro started negotiations with NAMSA on stockpile destruction of anti-personnel mines and securing financial means for these activities.

Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and the European Commission would therefore like to appeal to the participants of the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction (the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World) to join the Mine Free Regions Initiative and to work resolutely to end the unnecessary human suffering caused by the hidden killers, and leave a safer world to the next generation.

In the follow up, the countries mentioned above, will report on the progress made at the Standing Committee meetings and Meetings of States Parties.

---