



**THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

**Geneva, 21-25 November 2022**

**Statement**

**CLEARING MINED AREAS AND MINE RISK EDUCATION AND REDUCTION**

**Ministry of the Interior  
Civil Protection Directorate**

**NOVEMBER 2022**

Mr President, excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues and stakeholders of the global mine action system,

the Republic of Croatia and its implementation bodies continue to strongly support and implement the APMBC in all its aspects, namely by honouring and implementing undertaken obligations and strongly advocating for the implementation of transparency measures, providing assistance to victims of mines and UXO and developing international cooperation, ensuring the full universalization and implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in line with the Oslo Action Plan.

Important achievements and positive trends in mine action in the period since the last Meeting of the State Parties confirm our commitment to fulfilling the obligations and goals of the Convention. During 2021, 45.8 km<sup>2</sup> was released including 34.1 km<sup>2</sup> by clearance and 11.7 km<sup>2</sup> by non-technical and technical survey which resulted with 1.214 anti-personnel mines, 48 anti-tank mines, 810 unexploded ordnances found and destroyed. In addition, an area of 643.764 m<sup>2</sup> under the authority of the Ministry of Defence (military areas) was released as well. The Annual Mine Action Plan was financed by the State Budget funds and EU funding. It is important to mention that, like in the previous reporting year, in 2021, funds acquired for the demining operations from the EU contribution were significant. In 2021 the state budget had the biggest financing share with 69.8 % of the realized funds while EU funds contributed with 30.2%. In the 2014-2020 financial perspective, EU funds were used to clear almost 59 km<sup>2</sup> of challenging nature protected areas as a part of projects "Naturavita", "Fearless Velebit" and "Karlovac Karst", a last in line clearance project that was finalized in 2022 releasing 17.1 km<sup>2</sup> of predominately nature protected areas, establishing preconditions for sustainable development and revitalization of forests along with fire protection efforts.

Parallel with the implementation of the non-technical and technical survey activities and clearance operations, the control of marking of the hazardous areas was conducted, concluding the 2021 with 8.022 mine warning signs, which means almost over 39 mine warning signs per square kilometre of HA. Unfortunately, even with widely organized marking activities in the Republic of Croatia, during 2021 there were 2 accounted mine accidents, with only one of them recording victims. Mentioned incident occurred in the Karlovac County, when seven illegal migrants were harmed after activating PROM-1 bounding fragmentation AP mine in the marked hazardous area, resulting with one fatality, two heavy injuries and four light injuries.

The remaining challenge, which will be confronted in accordance with the Revised Mine Action plan for the remaining period of the Second Extension request remained on 37 Municipalities/ 7 Counties and at the end of 2021 amounts to 204.4 km<sup>2</sup> (136.8 km<sup>2</sup> CHA, 67.6 km<sup>2</sup> SHA), excluding the MoD areas of an additional 29.5 km<sup>2</sup>. Approximate number of the remaining anti-personnel mines emplaced based on the mine field records is 13.856 along with the additional 921 anti-tank mines, excluding the areas under the MoD jurisdiction.

In the legislative and implementation terms, the Republic of Croatia invests special efforts in mine risk education programmes as the best form of prevention action, and in programmes and projects of assisting and rehabilitating mine victims. In 2021, a total of 89 mine risk educations were held in 5 Counties and 21 cities and municipalities. The EORE activities covered a total of about 4,165 people, mostly elementary school age, as well as the target population of the local inhabitants of municipalities and cities within the hazardous areas. Portion of the elementary school EORE was

provided as a part of project activities in previously mentioned “Naturavita” project, financed from the EU Cohesion fund, along with creation of specific children educational books, coloring books and brochures along with EORE leaflets including around 700 children in the project vicinity of the HA danger County.

In recent years, Croatia has also invested significant efforts in providing assistance and in exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of mine action and will align itself within the broader European Union efforts in supporting the Mine Action challenges resulting from Russia's illegal, senseless and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. Mr President, The Republic of Croatia condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia’s continued attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure in Ukraine, especially in the terms of using banned antipersonnel mines in the eastern Kharkiv region.

Important achievements and positive trends in mine action in the period since the last Extension request confirm our commitment to fulfilling the obligations and goals of the Convention. With the continued upward trend of ensuring financial means, emphasizing the EU role in supporting the efforts in the 2021-2027 financial perspective, Croatia is on track to meet its commitments within the deadlines as defined in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Extension, contributing in the best possible way to the goal we all strive for together – a mine-free world!

Thank you!