



**Sixth Meeting of States Parties (6MSP) to the Convention on
Cluster Munitions (CCM)
Geneva, 5 – 7 September 2016**

**STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

Thank you Mr./Ms. Coordinator.

Victim assistance-related activities in Croatia are carried out in accordance with legal regulations by government bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with coordinating role of the Government Office for Mine Action.

The Trust Fund “Croatia without Mines” with local authorities has planned and organized the construction of children’s playground in Hrvatska Dubica Municipality (the Sisak-Moslavina County). This is of two-fold importance; first, this municipality is in the first group of the areas of special state concern; second, entire municipality was heavily affected by fighting during the Homeland War in 1990s, in particular with artillery shells and mortar grenades. Moreover, certain areas were mined with anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines as well. All this means that there is still a fair level of threat from UXOs in surrounding areas.¹

The settlement Slabinja where the playground is being built has the highest birth rate in entire municipality and until now it had no playground at all. The opening ceremony will be held in late September (after the school year starts) and will include awareness-raising educational theatre play for children about mine/UXO danger.

Within the framework “Economic Revitalization of Affected Communities”, the Trust Fund “Croatia without Mines” together with the Croatian Employment Service (CES) and relevant NGOs (MineAid, RCT, etc.) has conducted interviews with potential candidates and economic advisor, and agreed economic advice and support in developing business plans.

Direct users of this program are three unemployed women, between 38 and 49 years of age, who are mine victims/survivors, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence and members of ethnic minority groups. These women are coming from socially vulnerable families living in or near UXO-affected areas (the Sisak-Moslavina County).

¹ The Sisak-Moslavina County as such is the 2nd heaviest mine-contaminated county in Croatia with over ... km² of mine suspected area (MSA).

Finally, the Trust Fund “Croatia without Mines” recently launched the campaign called “A Step of Goodness”. The campaign aims to provide appropriate support and empower people and communities in mine suspected areas (MSA) and to raise public awareness about the problem and the danger of mines, cluster munitions’ remnants and UXOs in general in Croatia. In cooperation with the leading Croatian manufacturer of footwear, the company “Borovo”, they have created a special edition of the popular “Startas” sneakers for children in the mine-affected counties, which are usually also areas that are economically less developed or faced with different socio-economic challenges. To make this project come to life, the Trust Fund is now raising funds that will allow the production and purchase of the “Startas” sneakers for schoolchildren in these areas.²

Eventually, through this campaign parents will be relieved of another cost for the new school year, while children will be taught about basic social values, such as solidarity, tradition and active citizenship.

The “Documenta - Centre for Dealing with the Past” systematically works to advocate for the rights of civil war victims. They published the "List of Providers of Psychosocial Services" which was created with the aim of informing civil war victims on the availability of organizations and institutions that offer psychosocial support and rehabilitation treatments in Croatia. The list includes civil society organizations and government institutions in all Croatian counties.³

The “Documenta” has produced several case studies of civilian war victims and is preparing others with the goal to raise awareness about violations of human rights and advocating equitable legal solutions. They have also analyzed amendments to the Law on the Protection of Military and Civil War Invalids concerning the abolition of the right to maintenance and the result of the abolition.

A number of NGOs point to the worrying widespread trend of underfunding of their activities resulting in employees’ shortage and reduction of services. Should this trend continue, it will directly undermine efforts that have led to the creation of a solid network and sustainability of programs both on regional and national levels, as well as strengthening of the related organizations. At the same time, activities that have contributed to the empowerment of targeted vulnerable groups, which then became more visible through their direct participation or individual activities, will unavoidably become jeopardized.

Thank you.

² The Government Office for Mine Action is currently exploring ways to support this campaign.

³ As such, the list is not complete and is subject to changes and updates.