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Area clearance and cluster munition risk reduction

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

In September 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, assuming responsibility and obligation to clear the country of the cluster munition provide assistance for cluster munition victims and destroy all existing stocks. The implementation of the Convention commenced in March 2021.

Total suspected area under cluster munition in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 is 2,24 km² at 36 identified contaminated areas – micro-locations.

Since 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre and Norwegian People's Aid joined their efforts in non-technical survey of areas in BiH contaminated with cluster munition.

The preliminary results from 2011 indicated that there were 140 locations contaminated with cluster munition, with the total area of 12,17km².

During this process, in the period of 2012-2019, it has been found out that additional 2,43km² were contaminated with cluster munition at additional 35 locations, which makes total cluster munition contaminated area of 14,61 km².

In the same period, from 2012-2019, through cluster munition clearance and release of the land, 8,21km² of land has been returned to population. During non-technical survey operations, BiH Mine Action Centre teams cooperated with NPA teams, which resulted in separation of non-conventionally contaminated areas, i.e. areas contaminated with items projected in an improvised manner. Such areas will be treated as clearance of non-exploded ordnance (UXO). The total size of those areas is 3,6km².

Continuous implementation of Mine Risk Education that includes all other lethal remnants from the war enabled the prevention of suffering for population in BiH by any and all explosive items, including cluster munition, and small and light weapons. Since 2012, Mine Action Centre in BiH is constantly working on marking the areas contaminated with cluster munition. At present, over 500 signs have been placed with aim to warn the population of cluster munition.

Since 1992, a total of 195 persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina were victims of cluster munition, 35 of them with lethal outcome. The highest number of casualties occurred in the period from 1992-95, during the wartime events: the total of 172, out of which 31 with lethal outcome.

In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina established a Mine Victims Assistance Coordination Body tasked with assisting all victims of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war. The Coordination Body was appointed by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, consisting of 22 members from the government sector, non-government organizations, ministries from state and entity levels and international organizations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's duty under the Convention was to solve the problem of cluster munitions in 2021. But the problem in clearance of areas contaminated with cluster munitions was further complicated by COVID-19 global pandemic crisis that delayed the working season normally set for March 1st, in line with the climate conditions. Similar to the rest of the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina was caught in COVID-19 pandemic which caused either a cessation of, or hindrance to the work of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions. This reflected onto the process of mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from March to June 2020, since Mine Action Centre BiH worked with reduced capacities as well. It also caused cessation or serious deceleration of work performed by companies on the ground. After appointment of the Demining Commission in BiH (April 30, 2020), all companies that submitted request were accredited and field work continued.

Bosnia and Herzegovina plans to deal with the remaining cluster munitions problem in two ways – considering that some of the areas are also contaminated with AP mines. To be exact, there are 6 micro locations that cover a total of 651,480 m². These locations are planned to be treated for mines first, followed by clearance of cluster munitions. In order to provide continuity, as well as deal with both types of contamination within a single task, Bosnia and Herzegovina shall contract companies that have capabilities to deal with both issues: mines and cluster munitions.

The remaining cluster munitions contamination size is 2.137.068 m². The removal of cluster munitions will be continued until the goal is met, which means until Bosnia and Herzegovina is completely free from contamination with cluster munitions as we anticipate by September 1, 2022.

In order to fulfill the obligations under Article 4 of the Convention in requested timeframe (18 months) from 1 March 2021 to 1 September 2022, and the funds totaling 2.73 million US dollar are necessary. Funds shall be provided by donors and local sources. Part of the funds will be provided for governmental

organizations (Armed Forces of BiH, Civil Protections and BHMACH) through state budgets, while part of the funds will be provided through donor funds.

Thank you for your attention.