

Excellencies / colleagues,

On behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to participate in this mine clearance national stakeholder dialogue “Humanitarian Demining in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Towards Completion”.

We thank the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and BHMAC for hosting this national dialogue. ICBL believes that hosting this workshop is a very positive step, and that agreeing to discuss challenges and solutions in such an open manner expresses commitment to the principles of transparency and a bold vision for the future.

Having all actors around the table matters. The presence and participation of civil society in this meeting is also a demonstration of the inclusive nature of these workshops sponsored by the European Union. We applaud the EU council decision to hold this National Stakeholder Dialogue and the boundless effort and depth of expertise of the Mine Ban Treaty Implementation Support Unit in successfully assembling these important meetings of stakeholders.

We gratefully recognize the technical support provided by the ISU team to the states before and following the meetings. These efforts already go long way towards ensuring it to be another substantial and successful event that will address crucial issues. Furthermore, follow up interaction with the ISU and with the Committee on Article 5 Implementation can be expected to yield more clarity and will allow the international community to better understand the progress made and the remaining tasks.

Civil society is an important part of these collaborative efforts, and can offer wide-ranging experiences of success and ways to overcome challenges in mine action. The ICBL remains committed to advocating for a world without antipersonnel landmines, whereby Mine Ban Treaty States Parties, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, complete clearance as soon as possible, by their respective Article 5 deadlines or by 2025 at the latest. ICBL also continues to campaign for sufficient national and international funding for landmine clearance.

The ICBL has expressed its hope that these dialogues will recognize the need to tackle a range of challenges and will identify solutions towards the following matters among others. The preparation of the mine clearance deadline Extension Request provided for a closer look at the available data and an opportunity to address discrepancies. This could be considered, for example, by ensuring that national data is consistent with IMAS. In another instance, the use the concepts of Suspected Hazardous Areas and Confirmed Hazardous Areas in a manner consistent with the international standards would be a helpful consideration. The ICBL has noted that language such as “Mine Suspect Area” is not interpretable at the international level, unless it is explained through IMAS-consistent terminology.

Another consideration the ICBL has raised is the implementation of an efficient land release methodology and reporting consistently on areas cancelled through non-technical survey, as well as areas reduced through technical survey, and those areas released through clearance. This way the international community can better understand the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina and appreciate all the efforts undertaken to address, and comply with, the Mine Ban Treaty obligation.

Deciding on concrete steps can help to ensure that donors can have full confidence in a program. When all relevant actors from the institutions involved in mine action meet regularly and the necessary information flows well, this should limit delays in the adoption and implementation of decisions and plans.

During this workshop we expect to hear the proposed efforts for clearance and land release expressed through technical terms; we will speak about methodologies, policies, laws and plans, but let us not forget that mine action is above all about people. As one of the most significant thinkers of the 20th century, Franz Fanon said: “No phraseology can be a substitute for reality.” Or, in the words of Ms. Selma Guso from earlier today, what happens here will affect someone’s life, a person’s life, a life of a community. Decisions taken here can ensure that people’s lives are made as safe as possible, as quickly as possible – that people can walk and play in safety, work the land, use the forests, and access the social and economic benefits of demining.

Thank you.