



THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

**The Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Oslo, 25-29 November 2019**

Agenda item 7: Review of the operation and status of the Convention

c) Clearing mined areas

- Mine risk education (MRE) -

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TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER

Mister President,

The Republic of Croatia, together with clearing hazardous areas stays committed to carrying out Mine Risk Education and does so continuously and in accordance with undertaken obligations and government strategy, namely yearly mine action plans.

Precise marking of HA (*hazardous areas*), the possibility of replying to inquiries of mine status by providing maps and CDs, as well as using the mine information web portal and mobile application, positively affect the prevention on mine incidents. However, the very fact that HA (*hazardous areas*) exist calls for additional activities of informing the public of the still present mine risk.

Comprehensive MRE (*Mine Risk Education*), together with marking of HA (*hazardous areas*), has resulted in a significant reduction of mine victims in the Republic of Croatia. In mine accidents over the last review period, four people have been killed and eight have suffered bodily injuries. In the last three years, we haven't had any ERW casualties and the last civilian casualty occurred in 2014. The last record of a child suffering landmine injuries was in 2004.

In the last five years, the former CROMAC (*Croatian Mine Action Centre*), and as of the beginning this year the Civil Protection Directorate Mol, have coordinated a large number of activities related to informing the public of mine hazards.

More than 20.000 citizens, most of them kindergarten and primary school children, attend numerous lectures and presentations organised yearly. MRE (*Mine Risk Education*) is also offered to special target groups – members of hunters associations, members of the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service, mountaineers, farmers etc. One project stands out in particular. This is a project by the non-government sector, which has been organising, together with the Ministry of the Interior and other partners, summer holidays for war-affected children, some of whom are mine victims. Providing accommodation, rest and rehabilitation on the Adriatic Sea, the project organises age-appropriate mine risk education as well. Many children from Croatia, as well as over 200 children and their teachers from Srebrenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ukraine, Iraq and Syria have received accommodation and mine risk education through this commendable project.

MRE (*Mine Risk Education*) was carried out in the capital city of Zagreb and in 15 other counties, where municipal authorities cooperate with other non-government organisations and association, such as Croatian Red Cross.

Most activities related to MRE (*Mine Risk Education*) were carried out in cooperation with the competent police departments through the "Fewer Weapons, Fewer Tragedies" campaign. Most education activities and events in Croatia and in the world have been featured on all shareholders' websites and have had media coverage.

Furthermore, each year in the review period, the Republic of Croatia marked the 4th of April, the International Mine Awareness Day. The numerous events took place in different towns, on main squares, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, Croatian Red Cross, association "Croatia Helps", the National Protection and Rescue Directorate and other shareholders. They all gave their

contribution to the mine action by distributing educational brochures and publications, exhibiting ERW (*explosive remnants of war*), demonstrating sitting volleyball for persons with disabilities, educational theatre plays for children and numerous other activities. The events were always attended by high-ranking government officials.

In addition, the Republic of Croatia proclaimed April as the Mine Awareness month. Media campaign and guest appearances of relevant stakeholders of the mine action system on radio and television take place throughout the month.

Last but not least, I would like to mention a unique Croatian mine education project, jointly implemented by the non-government sector and the Ministry of Croatian War Veterans. The project aims to educate Homeland War veterans, some of whom are mine victims themselves, on how to train others, making this training more important and authentic. This *Train the trainers approach* has also been jointly developed by the non-government sector and the Ministry of Croatian War Veterans. We think this project is extremely useful for all participants and based on exclusively positive outcomes of its implementation, we are willing and ready to share its model with anyone who would be interested.

In conclusion, the Republic of Croatia supports the guidelines of the Oslo Action Plan and will continue to implement MRE (*Mine Risk Education*) activities. The Republic of Croatia will strive to improve the effectiveness of its efforts and will continue to be available for the exchange of knowledge and experience in the mine action segment.