

**Comments on Bosnia and Herzegovina's Article 4 Extension Request
Delivered by Norwegian People's Aid, on behalf of Mine Action Review
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (part 1)
25–27 November 2020**

Thank you, Mr, President.

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Mine Action Review project.

Mine Action Review appreciates that anti-personnel mine contamination is the biggest explosive threat in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). However, given the relatively small scale of cluster munition remnant contamination, BiH could have completed clearance within its original 10-year Article 4 deadline had there been greater political will and national ownership from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMAC), the Demining Commission, and their superiors in the government.

BiH's National Mine Action Strategy 2018–2025 foresees fulfilment of Article 4 by the March 2021 deadline. However, a lack of requisite and timely planning by BHMAC to meet this deadline has meant that the rate of cluster munition clearance remained unacceptably slow and BiH has had to request an 18-month extension to 1 September 2022.

BHMAC faced an additional challenge to Article 4 implementation due to the nearly 6-month delay by the Council of Ministers in appointing a Demining Commission to renew demining accreditations, including those of the Armed Forces, the Federal Administration of Civil Protection, and Norwegian People's Aid, all of which conduct cluster munition clearance. Progress in survey and clearance of cluster munition contamination in 2020 was further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These delays serve as a reminder to affected States Parties not to delay implementation of Article 4 and to leave a sufficient safety margin for unforeseen obstacles.

BHMAC also faces the additional obstacle of a cluster munition clearance task in the Republika Srpska which also contains depleted uranium munitions remaining from NATO air strikes. The presence of depleted uranium complicates cluster munition clearance as deminers must be adequately trained and protected against exposure to the uranium. Mine Action Review encourages BHMAC to secure an appropriate solution and funding for this task as soon as possible, and then commence with clearance without delay, so that it does not prevent completion within the requested deadline extension.

It is entirely possible for BHMAC to complete clearance within this 18-month extension period, but BHMAC *must* develop a more detailed and costed Article 4 work plan, with concrete milestones for the release of all remaining CMR-contaminated area by 1 September 2022 and ensure it is implemented according to plan.

Mine Action Review commends BiH and Germany for the establishment of a Country Coalition this year, which has provided a forum for regular dialogue among all mine action stakeholders to strengthen coordination and identify and overcome challenges. We hope this Country Coalition can advance CCM Article 4 and help ensure completion by the extended deadline.

Lastly, we encourage BHMAC to provide States Parties with:

- Regular updates to its Article 4 planning, based on actual annual output achieved.

- More accurate and consistent reporting, in line with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), including disaggregating cluster munition-contaminated area reduced through technical survey from area released through clearance.
- Information on what steps it plans to further mainstream gender and diversity within its mine action programme.
- Details of plans for addressing the discovery of previously unknown cluster munition contamination following completion (i.e. residual contamination).

Thank you.