

The Board of Donors for Demining in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Communique

The Board of Donors for Demining in Bosnia and Herzegovina met in Sarajevo on 20 March 2002. The Board welcomed specially Mr Beriz Belkic, Mr Jozo Krizanovic and Mr. Zivko Radisic of the BiH Presidency, the High Representative Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch, the Minister for Civil Affairs and Communication Mr. Svetozar Mihajlovic, the Head of the OSCE Ambassador Robert Beecroft and all Ambassadors and other Board of Donor members.

The High Representative addressed the Board and outlined the political importance for the Government of BiH to place on mine action. He welcomed the recent adoption of the Demining Law which gives the BiH state level ownership and authority to move positively to solve the mine problem across BiH. He also noted the work which had been done to develop a long-term strategy for demining and stressed the significance of this for BiH's future. He commended the BiH authority's commitment to make BiH free from the effects of mines by 2010.

The Chairman of the Joint Presidency Mr Belkic expressed his gratitude for the Board of Donor's assistance in mine action to BiH over recent years. He said these efforts had been fundamental to progress so far and the adoption of the Demining Law clearly would help further. The BiH Presidency is fully aware of the mine problem and will continue to strongly support the demining strategy.

The Minister for Civil Affairs and Communication Mr Mihajlovic explained to the Board of Donors the key aspects and subsequent effects of the Demining Law. He stressed that the Law will enable the current demining structures and management to be strengthened so that the vision of BiH "free from the effects of mines by 2010" can become a reality. One of the key issues he outlined was the State and Entity budgets for this year, which will see a significant increase over previous years for mine action funding, including MAC staff salaries. This will be a significant step towards full funding of the demining structure.

The Board of Donors received the Demining Commission's draft Demining Strategy which outlines the principal steps which need to be taken to ensure BiH becomes a "mine effect free" country by 2010.

The Board of Donors welcomed the new member, France, to the Board.

In a wide ranging discussion, the international members of the Board of Donors emphasized the need to raise the overall awareness of the importance of demining in the development of BiH. This would not only to give the International Community confidence that progress was being made and increase donor funding, but also help to improve BiH's economy and the development of her people.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for the end of May 2002.

Rear Admiral Hugh Edleston

Military Advisor to the High Representative

Co-Chairman of the Board of Donors

Henrik Kolstrup

Resident Representative United Nations
Development Programme

Co-Chairman of the Board of Donors