

4 April the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

**The speech by Helena Eversole
UN Resident Coordinator
Head of UNICEF BiH**

Dear Minister Halilovic, ladies and gentlemen:

On this Global Mine Awareness day, I am wearing two hats; Resident Coordinator of the UN Family of 14 Agencies in BiH and Representative of UNICEF – who with UNDP is the most active agency in MRE and Mine victim assistance.

Today we are marking the first International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance for Mine Action declared by the UN General Assembly.

Why mark such a day? Because landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to injure and kill people throughout the world. These remnants of war pose a huge threat to children and their communities in more than 80 countries – **most of them no longer in conflict!** Of the 12-20,000 people killed or disabled each year by these deadly weapons, some 20% are children. And we estimate that 85% of those children die before they can get medical attention.

So today, the United Nations is urging all governments to implement the international treaties related to explosive remnants of war, especially the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty. We also urge the signing and ratification of the Protocol V of the Convention on Conventional Weapons that will obligate parties to conflict to **clear explosive munitions that threaten civilians after war has ended.**

In BiH, roughly **one third of the population** lives with mines in their communities – on their doorsteps. Some 5000 Bosnian civilians have been killed or injured by mines – and 1520 of

those after the war ended. These mines and unexploded ordnance pose a real threat to Bosnians 'right to life, liberty, and security of a person', enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The BIH government commitment to removing these deadly weapons, and to enabling families and communities to contain the threat of them is clear. And UNICEF and UNDP are committed to supporting and strengthening this commitment.

- We have supported the BHMACH and NGOs in getting accurate, critical information about landmines and unexploded ordnance to all affected communities and families = how to recognise them and what to do when one is found
- The most affected communities have now developed their own plans to continually address the threat of these weapons in their communities
- And some 65 square kilometres have now been cleared of mines.

The UN recognises that much remains to be done. We acknowledge the critical role of donors in supporting our efforts and those of government, and we ask that they continue their partnership with us.

Finally, we know that most accidents occur in the Spring time – as snows melt and mines/ordnances shift positions. The Spring time is time for working or playing in fields and forests. We ask that everyone remain aware and particularly careful this Spring.