

# Mine Problem in the Region of Southeastern Europe: International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) and the Southeastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC)

SE Europe is one of the most mine-affected regions in the world. This article examines the extent of the mine and UXO problem in each of the mine-affected countries in SE Europe, as well as discusses the steps being taken by various organizations in order to solve the mine-related problems in the region.

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## Mine Problem of the Countries in SE Europe

Unlike other multiethnic states, the former Yugoslavia has fallen apart as a result of war conflicts, which have left

large mined areas all over SE Europe. Mine contamination has impacted all countries of the former Yugoslavia and also Albania. Consequently, SE Europe has become one of the most mine-contaminated regions in the world. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia face considerable mine and UXO problems, with BiH and Croatia being the most affected. The

used in the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:

- ATMs: TMM 1, TMA 3, TMA 4, TMRP 6
- APLs: PMA-1, PMA-2, PROM-1A, PROM-2A, PMR

### Albania

Conflict in Kosovo contributed to destabilizing this part of the region. During the Kosovo crisis in 1998–1999, a large number of mines were laid along the Kosovo-Albania border and into Albanian territory. In addition, there were unexploded shells, rockets and mortars left in the area. The mine-contaminated strip contains 85 high-risk areas and is 120 km long, stretching from Shishtavec in the south to Tropoje in the north. Thirty-nine villages in Albania are directly affected by mines—27 people have been killed and 216 have been injured by mine-related incidents.

In 1999, the government of Albania established the pillar of the Albanian Mine Action Program. The program policy and strategy were developed by the Albanian Mine Action Committee and implemented by the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE). The presence of mines and UXO on the Albania-Kosovo border in the northeast not only poses a physical threat to the population, but also prevents the use of the land. In

addition, refugees returning in 1999, led to safety concerns in the underdeveloped border area. Removal of the landmine threat combined with the stability of the campaign, “Weapons in Exchange for Development,” as well as stockpile destruction, will help the development of these areas.

With donors’ support, AMAE has demined an area of 0.5 sq km. In 2002, Albania set up a mine action strategy that foresees Albania free of mines and UXO by 2010. Albania wishes to eliminate the impact of mines and UXO in the northeastern part of Albania by 2005. Stockpile destruction in Albania, destroying 1,683,860 mines, was completed on April 4, 2002. In 2003, Albanian plans to conduct a general survey of a 1.9 sq km area and a technical survey of a 1.5 sq km area and demine a 350,000 sq m area.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Besides Croatia, BiH is the most mine and UXO contaminated country in the SE Europe. Mine-suspected area covers approximately 2130.6 sq km in BiH, which represents 4.17 percent of all its territory. After the analysis was conducted, it was estimated that there are approximately 670,000 mines and 650,000 items of UXO in approximately 10,000 locations. Mine suspected areas are defined as unused areas because of the possible risk of mines and UXO. The mine-suspected area structure is divided into three categories according to demining priority:

- The first category consists of locations for everyday use, areas planned for housing, reconstruction and rebuilding, areas of infrastructure and economical resources. Such areas cover 2,438 sq km of BiH territory, representing 11.36 percent of total mine-suspected area.
- The second category consists of locations for occasional use, zones of contact with the first category, agricultural land and forests. Such areas cover 590.1 sq km of BiH territory, representing 27.5 percent of total mine-suspected area.
- The third category consists of the remaining suspected land. Such areas cover 13,118 sq km of BiH territory, representing 61.14 percent of total mine-suspected area.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center (BHMAC) was founded in 1996 by the United Nations Mine Action Center (UNMAC). In 1998, the responsibility for demining activities was handed over to the government of BiH, with significant financial support from the international community. The legal framework for the implementation of humanitarian demining was created at the beginning of 2002, when the Demining Law in BiH was passed. The Demining Law defines demining and the organizational structure of demining, and determines the implementing organizations and their tasks. The law also regulates demining methodology and defines the content of the demining plan. The focus is put on regulation of deminers’ rights and relations, demining methods and quality control of the demining operations.

The mine action strategy for BiH encompasses the mine action vision and mission, strategic and operational goals, precise strategic plan and strategic projects. The mission is considered to be the creation of prerequisites for the protection of the population and the development of economic and natural resources in BiH until 2010. Strategic goals are creating the conditions for constant and efficient implementation of demining; extensive mine risk education (MRE) and marking and fencing; capacity building; development of new technologies; international cooperation; revival of donors’ interest; and monitoring the implementation of the Ottawa Convention commitments. The following five strategic projects are presented in the strategy:

- Establishment of the regional center for Mine Detection Dog (MDD) Training
- Creation of a network of journalists involved in mine action
- Systematic mine impact survey
- Permanent marking of mine risk areas
- Handover of the agricultural land to the owners

The organizational structure of demining consists of the mine action authorities on a national level within BiH, entity level and international level. They are:

- The Demining Commission in BiH
- BHMAC
- Civil Defense

- Armies of Entities
- The Board of Donors

The Demining Commission is a central demining authority that was founded by a Decree of the Council of Ministers of BiH and is directly responsible to the Ministry of Civil Affairs and Communications. The committee’s task is to present mine information (both problems and actions) to the national and international public, to approve demining standards, to nominate candidates for BHMAC’s Director and Assistants’ positions, to authorize internal rules and regulations, to prepare and submit reports to the Council of Ministers and donors and to route funds needed for mine action. BHMAC is an operational service of the committee tasked with the following:

- Maintenance and management of the central minefields and mine-suspected area database
- Preparation and proposals for technical safety standards and standards for the quality control of demining works
- Accreditation of demining companies
- Creation of the training program and monitoring of the training and reporting
- Preparation of demining project proposals
- Activity-planning including budget estimates
- Completion of written reports and financial reports

During the past year, significant progress in mine action activities has been noted in BiH. It is manifested in the following parameters: passage of legislation, creation of a demining strategy for BiH, execution of systematic survey, reorganization and establishment of the new organizational structure of BHMAC, development of demining capacities (41 demining organizations) and engagement of the army and Civil Defense in mine action. The biggest concern in BiH is the slow pace of demining and the large number of mine incidents (80-100 casualties per year).

### Croatia

The war in Croatia lasted from 1991–1995, leaving approximately 500,000 mines and 400,000 UXO

■ Table 1: Mine Contamination in the Region of SE Europe.

Mine Contamination Indicators	Mine-Contaminated Countries					
	ALBANIA	BiH	CROATIA	MACEDONIA	SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO	
					SERBIA	KOSOVO
MINE CONTAMINATED AREA	15.2 sq km	2,130.6 sq km	1,700 sq km	21 sq km	39 sq km	45 sq km
INITIAL MINE CONTAMINATION ESTIMATE	170 sq km	4,000 sq km	13,000 sq km	80 sq km	100 sq km	80 sq km
PERCENTAGE OF THE COUNTRY CONTAMINATED WITH MINES	0.02%	4.17%	3%	0.08%	0.05%	0.4%
NUMBER OF MINES AND UXO	Unknown	670,000 mines 650,000 UXO	500,000 mines 400,000 UXO	2,000 mines 70,000 UXO	71,000 mines 63 missiles	25,000 mines 22,000 UXO
NUMBER OF MINE VICTIMS	232	4,535	1,838	18	350	461
NUMBER OF MINES PER SQ KM	Unknown/ high density minefields	19.5	8.8	0.07	0.69	2.2
PERIOD OF MINE DEPLOYMENT	1999	1992–1995	1991–1995	2001	1999	1999
RATIFICATION OF THE OTTAWA TREATY	2000	1998	1998	2001	2003	
NUMBER OF STOCKPILED MINES TO BE DESTROYED	1.68 million APLs destroyed on 4/4/02	532,556 APLs destroyed	230,000 APLs destroyed	No existing data	No existing data	No existing data



planted and scattered in Croatia. At the end of 2002, mine-contaminated area was estimated at 1,630 sq km (170 sq km of minefields and around 1,460 sq km containing individual mines—mine-suspected area not used by citizens). In 1996, the United Nations estimated the mine-contaminated area of Croatia to be 13,000 sq km.

The Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC) has a database on minefields. The data is taken from original minefield records of the warring parties that laid the minefields. In the database, 132,186 APLs and 79,408 ATMs are recorded—totaling 211,594 mines overall. The database on mine-suspected areas is based on collected reports from various military personnel, as well as from civilians. Fourteen counties are considered to be mine-contaminated; the most mine-contaminated counties are: Osjecko-baranjska, Sisacko-moslavacka, Vukovarsko-srijemska, Karlovacka and Zadarska. There is also a great concentration of mines around the cities that are located on the former confrontation line: Sisak, Benkovac, Karlovac, Knin, Osijek and Vukovar. Realizing all the problems that mine wars encompass, Croatia proclaimed a Moratorium on usage, production, import, export and stockpiling of landmines in April 1996. In addition, Croatia was one of the first countries to support the Ottawa process; it cooperated in the preparation of the Convention and signed it in

December 1997. Croatia was the 12<sup>th</sup> country among the signatory states that ratified the Convention. Croatia finished destroying its stockpiled mines by the end of 2002.

Analyzing the mine action situation and the impact of mines on safety, humanitarian, environmental, economic and developmental problems of SE Europe, it can be concluded that Croatia inputs significant resources in mine action and that it achieves good results. The results can especially be seen through:

- Unity of all political, social and state factors involved in mine action activities and observance of the obligations of the Ottawa Treaty.
- Good results in mine-suspected area reduction, in demining and mine-suspected area marking, mine awareness education and mine victims assistance.
- Clearly defined mine action strategy proclaimed by the Croatian Parliament.
- Firm determination of Croatia to finance mine action programs, which enable its stability.
- Support of the academic community in systematically solving certain problems, assistance in decision-making and monitoring of the development of new demining technologies and their testing and introduction into operative use.
- Development of demining capacities that will provide professional assistance to the countries in SE Europe and beyond.

### Macedonia

In Macedonia, mine-suspected area covers 21 sq km with 2,000 mines and 70,000 UXO, and spreads along the border with the province of Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro). There is no existing mine action system and mine action activities are carried out by Civil Defense Forces. Demining activities started in October 2001 and 30 villages and roads in the area of Tetovo and Kumanovo were cleared. During 2002, the ITF trained a part of the personnel to conduct mine action activities. During the same year, ITF contracted a non-governmental organization (NGO) from BiH that cleared 3.5 million sq m and surveyed 3,000 houses and yards. The fact that the Albanian People's Army demined their minefields is quite unique for Macedonia.

In Macedonia, there are leftover mines from World War I and II along the Greek border near Dorjansko-jezero, where 1,000 mines are located each year. The mine action activities in Macedonia serve as a positive example of a possible regional cooperation with a NGO from BiH conducting a significant part of battle area clearance activities in Macedonia, in a quite short period of time. ITF's involvement through a "Train and Equip" training program to swiftly build a mine action capacity in Macedonia, also represents a positive step forward. Due to the small amount of mine-suspected area, well-coordinated activities by the UN Mine Action Office

(UNMAO) and ITF, training of locals in all aspects of mine action, and arrival of trained teams from BiH, it is likely that the mine impact in Macedonia will be eliminated by the end of 2003.

### Serbia and Montenegro

Mines and UXO originate from the war in Croatia, from the Kosovo conflict and from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Forces engagement in Yugoslavia. There are many discarded cluster bombs as a direct result of that engagement. Mine contamination covers approximately a 39 sq km area. Twenty-nine sq km are contaminated with cluster bombs in several locations: Nia (total of three sub locations covering the area of two sq km); Kraljevo (total of three sub locations covering the area of one sq km); Sjenica (total of two sub locations covering the area of 16 sq km); Merdare (total of two sub locations covering the area of three sq km); Kopaonik (total of two sub locations covering the area of six sq km); Cacak (one location covering the area of 0.7 sq km); and Vladimirci (one location covering the area of 0.2 sq km).

The mine-contaminated area consists of 10 sq km and is divided into and along the borderline with the Republic of Croatia with 103 minefields covering a 41.5 sq km area that includes approximately 11,000 mines. There were no military actions in this area so the minefields were laid as a means of precaution along the so-called "tank advancement lines," as well as to prevent the possible

advancement of ground infantry. According to the available mine records of the former Yugoslav army, a number of minefields were "reinforced" by placing APMs (PMA-1) under some mines in the minefields. Serbia and Montenegro signed the Ottawa Convention as the last state in SE Europe and ratified the agreement in June 2003.

The province of Kosovo is also mine-contaminated. Six hundred minefields covering the area of 30.5 sq km have been demined with 18,000 APLs, 5,500 ATMs and around 13,500 pieces of UXO cleared. There are still dangerous areas around former stockpiles that were bombed during NATO attacks. The United Nation Office of Project Service (UNOPS) has played an important role in supporting the Kosovo mine action activities. It was UNOPS's judgment that allowed the mine and UXO problems in Kosovo to be minimized by the end of 2001. Experts say that the level of impact is similar, if not lower than the level of impact in other European countries still disposing UXO from World War I. For example, Slovenia still disposes of approximately 3,000 located items of UXO per year, mostly from World War I and II. UNMAC has trained several members of the Kosovo Protection Corps (7 teams), thus enabling them to tackle and solve the remaining mine and UXO-related problems.

Kosovo stands out as an example of fast and efficient UN capacity-building activities that led to the first successfully completed mine action campaign in the

world. However, there is still a need to continue with mine action activities due to the fact that mine-contaminated areas are still recorded, as well as mine incidents, even though the UN operations have been completed.

Montenegro also has a problem with mine and UXO contamination. The Croatia and BiH borderline areas are contaminated and still not fully surveyed. Cooperation with Croatia started in that particular area with joint survey teams assessing the level of mine and UXO contamination of the Debeli-Brijeg borderline area. That was a first and important step in nated and still not fully surveyed. Cooperation with Croatia started in that particular area with joint survey teams assessing the level of mine and UXO contamination of the Debeli-Brijeg borderline area. That was a first and important step in the joint effort of the multi-state survey teams. UXO disposed into the Adriatic Sea also presents a problem for Montenegro.

### The ITF's Role in SE Europe

ITF is a humanitarian, non-profit organization dedicated to clearing landmines in SE Europe and the world. When first established by the Slovenian government in March 2003, ITF was designed to assist BiH in solving its landmine problem and help the surviving landmine victims in terms of their physical and socio-economic rehabilitation.



■ A close up of the steps involved in demining.





Because BiH was not the only country in SE Europe faced with a mine problem, it was natural that ITF should spread its activities to other mine-affected countries in the region. Thus, ITF's area of operation presently includes Albania, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro.

ITF seeks to attract public and private donors for mine action related activities in SE Europe including mine clearance, landmine survivor assistance, MRE and training. While ITF has adopted a holistic approach to the landmine and UXO problem, we are also striving to meet the needs of mine-affected communities on the ground level. ITF is working closely with national governments and mine action centers (MACs) in the mine-affected countries to ensure that donated funds are spent on providing useful help to the local populations. To this end ITF also initiated the establishment of SEEMACC. The following activities are carried out by ITF:

- Mine Clearance: ITF is funding mine and battle area clearance activities in Albania, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), and has also started its operation in the Caucasus.

- Mine Victims Assistance (MVA): ITF is supporting various MVA programs, from rehabilitation (mainly carried out at the Institute for Rehabilitation of the Republic of Slovenia) to socio-economic integration and awareness programs.

- Training: ITF has identified training in different aspects of mine action as one of the priorities for successful demining in SE Europe. ITF has been funding management training courses in relation to mine action as well as explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training, and implementing Train and Equip programs (in FRY and Macedonia) in addition to providing training courses for medical personnel in the field of MVA.

- Regional Approach: ITF firmly believes regional cooperation to be the key to the efficiency and cost-effective implementation of mine action programs. It can also promote post-conflict political rehabilitation in the region. For this purpose, ITF initiated the establishment of SEEMACC.

## MRE Programs

One of the main advantages for using the ITF for funding the mine action activities is our experience in the region with the issues involved because Slovenia used to be a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Unlike the other countries of former Yugoslavia however, Slovenia does not have a mine problem. We understand the history, mentality and language spoken in the territories of the mine-contaminated countries, which makes it easier to coordinate our activities with the relevant national and local authorities. ITF also offers "tailoring" of projects, and provides transparency and visibility in spending donated funds, as well as the matching-fund mechanism. Some of the benefits that ITF provides are briefly discussed below.

### Tailor-Made Projects

The donor decides which of the activities being implemented in the field of mine action in the region it wants to support. Consistent with the donor's wishes, ITF will then develop and submit a proposal for a project to be funded. The project is thus designed in accordance with the preferences of the individual donor (country, activity, etc.). However, it also takes into account wishes and needs of the mine-affected country as well as the local community.

### Coordination with National Authorities

ITF is working closely with the authorities responsible for mine action programs in SE Europe in order to ensure that the help and assistance provided are in fact needed and that the programs being implemented are coordinated with the national plans.

### Transparency

ITF's tight internal financial management control and annual external audits ensure that donated funds are properly accounted for.

### Visibility of Donations

The donor is assured of the visibility of its donation in the field as well as via periodic ITF publications and reports.

## Matching-Fund Mechanism

The United States government has instituted a matching-fund mechanism, whereby every dollar raised by ITF is matched by an additional dollar provided by the United States government. These U.S. funds can be spent on the same project as the original donation (if the project has been deemed to qualify for the matching fund by both ITF and the United States) or alternatively, the money in the matching fund can be used to finance other mine action projects in SE Europe.

## Monitoring and Evaluating

Prior to clearing, demining sites are inspected by ITF staff from the implementation offices to evaluate the demining priority of a given area. Relevant assessment and other reports must be written, taking into account various factors. Subject to donor request ITF also employs a monitoring firm to oversee and monitor the work of the demining company on a daily basis, thus ensuring that the removal of mines is carried out in accordance with applicable standards and safety requirements. In 2002, ITF employed two monitoring firms—both were selected by tender. In addition, ITF conducts post-clearance checks in order to determine and assess the results of mine-clearance activities. With minor modifications and tailoring, the format used can also be applied to the evaluation and assessment of other mine action projects that are being implemented by ITF.

## ITF Results in the SE Europe

The following sections discuss the impact of ITF in fundraising, demining activities and training in SE Europe.

## Fundraising

From its inception until May 2003, ITF succeeded in raising more than \$119 million (U.S.) from more than 24 countries, 30 organizations/companies and 100 individuals, as well as from the European Union (EU). The biggest donors to the ITF include Canada, Croatia, EU, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and the United States. While the majority of the donated funds have been spent on demining activities and MVA programs,

some have been directed towards capacity building, MRE and other mine action related activities.

## Activities: Demining/Battle Area Clearance

The ITF's demining and battle area clearance operations are taking place in Albania, Croatia, BiH, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro. The demining work is usually awarded through an open bid procedure that is conducted by the ITF. The demining work can also be awarded directly if this is an explicit wish of the donor. The work is closely monitored by the ITF staff as well as the professional monitors employed by the ITF that visit the demining sites daily. Since ITF started the execution of the demining work, more than 30 different companies and eight NGOs executed demining work and cleared more than 37 million sq meters of land with 17,956 mines and 16,067 UXO found.

## Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of mine victims is an important component of the program implemented by the ITF. When ITF was established in 1998, it set a goal of earmarking 15 percent of all donations for MVA associated programs. Only 6.3 percent of funds have actually gone towards MVA. For that reason, the Workshop on Assistance to Landmine Survivors and Victims in SE Europe was organized July 1–2, 2002. The goal of the workshop was to identify possible strategies and venues for regional resourcing, cooperation and coordination in the field of landmine survivors and victim assistance. The goal of the workshop was achieved by presentations that included country status reports, perspectives on gaps and services in regional approaches, and NGO and donor perspectives on MVA. The workshop included extensive discussion among the participants on how to meet MVA needs and coordinate efforts more effectively.

The ITF MVA program is thus implemented on three different levels:

- Rehabilitation of mine victims from SE Europe at the Slovenian Rehabilitation Institute. From the beginning of the ITF's

operation until May 2002, 635 mine victims from BiH, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia were treated at the Slovenian Rehabilitation Institute.

- Rehabilitation at the Rehabilitation Centers in BiH. ITF also funded rehabilitation of 127 mine victims at the rehabilitation centers in Fojnica and Mostar in BiH.

- Other MVA programs implemented by various NGOs in BiH and other mine-affected countries in the region.

Other programs that ITF funded in BiH and Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) include programs of Landmine Survivors Network, International Rescue Committee, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Spirit of Soccer and Association for Disabled.

## Training

ITF believes that capacity building is crucial for the mine-affected countries of SE Europe to be able to more effectively cope with the landmine problem. Therefore, ITF organizes and funds several training courses based on the identified needs that exist in the mine-affected countries in the region. The needs already identified steered us in the direction of organizing the following trainings:

In the field of demining, EOD training courses and Monitoring and Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Control (QC) courses are held.

- EOD training is organized for deminers from SE Europe at the Training Centre for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief in Ig, Slovenia. The courses proved to be useful given the number of deep buried mines, fugases and UXO spread throughout the region—the deminers that attend the EOD course are trained to deal with these kinds of ordnance. Until now five such courses have been organized, the first session was in October-November 2000, the second in March-April 2001, the third in September-October 2001, the fourth in March 2002 and the last one in October 2002 where 62 experts from SE Europe were trained.

- ITF also organized Monitoring and QA/QC training at Buna for the 28 participants from monitoring firms and BHMAL. The emphasis was given to

the professional cooperation of the monitors with the MAC inspectors in the framework of the common goal of assuring quality, which will be the safety guarantee for demining personnel as well as for future users of the cleared areas.

In the field of mine victim rehabilitation, the technical assistance trainings and seminars are organized by the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation. The Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation is also giving technical assistance to the mine-affected countries in SE Europe, which is crucial for the development of indigenous and sustainable local capacities. Until May 2003, 285 different experts from BiH, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) and Albania attended training or seminars organized by the institute either in Slovenia or BiH. ITF funds the following programmes of training:

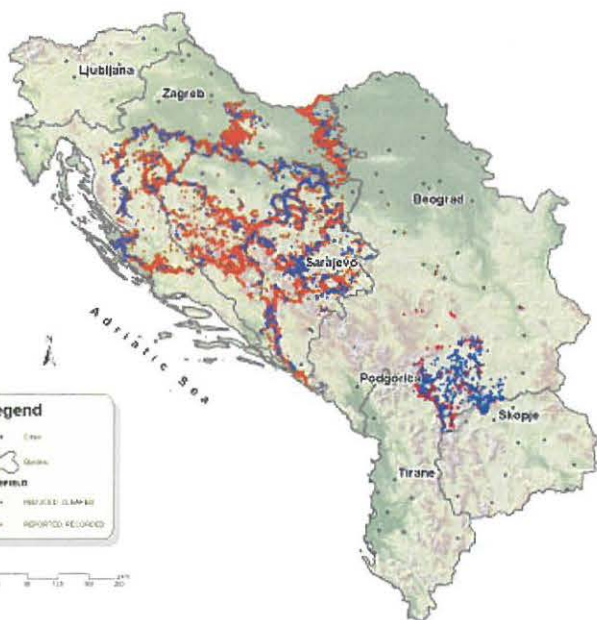
- Training on electromyography
- Training in Bobath
- Seminar on professional rehabilitation and the employment of the disabled in Fojnica, BiH
- Rehabilitation training in physiatrist and rehabilitation in rehabilitations centers in Fojnica and Mostar

- Training program for orthopedic technicians at the University College for Health studies in Ljubljana (three-year study program; the students are obliged to return to their countries after the successful completion of their studies)

The fact is that this kind of training is not provided anywhere else in SE Europe. Qualified personnel are sorely lacking in the region; therefore, providing training opportunities for the demining personnel in SE Europe becomes even more important. The development of local structures and capabilities is crucial for the country to take ownership of the problem and provide its people with long-term solutions. Here are a few examples of the training sessions underway in SE Europe.

- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)/Cranfield Senior management and middle management trainings: Management training is important because the success of mine





action to a great extent depends on sound management skills. UNDP in partnership with Cranfield University (UK) have initiated a series of management training courses for national managers of mine action programs. The first senior management course funded by ITF took place from January 21–March 1, 2002, at the Training Center for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief in Ig, Slovenia. Sixteen senior managers of regional programs from Albania, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro including the province of Kosovo, Azerbaijan and ITF attended the training. The course was of great importance as it was the first regionally based course of the series of UNDP Mine Action Senior Management Training programs. The participants attending the training course expressed their satisfaction with the course, which was implemented by the Centre for Management Development and Training at the Faculty of Economics (CISEF) at the University of Ljubljana.

- A middle management course for SE Europe was executed at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana from December 9, 2002 to February 7, 2003. Eighteen participants from SE Europe attended the course that was again implemented by CISEF.

ITF is also planning to fund the execution of such trainings for the region of Caucasus.

### Regional Approach: Does it Present a Value-Added?

Regional cooperation in SE Europe has proven invaluable in many areas of mine action, ranging from a technical type of cooperation like identifying common demining projects on the borders of neighboring countries, to efforts of political significance in the process of post-conflict rehabilitation. The cooperation process was formalized in SEEMACC, in which ITF has become a focal point. It is ITF's firm belief that regional cooperation has contributed, and will continue to contribute even more so in the future, to a more efficient use of resources for mine action in the region, as well as to the sharing of knowledge between the countries in the area of mine action. A regional approach can also be seen as a vehicle for a better utilization of available resources. The work done in the scope of SEEMACC is presented in the next section and the lessons learned in this region could perhaps prove invaluable for the other mine-contaminated regions in the world.

### SEEMACC

Several organizations and initiatives are active in SE Europe, which all intend to assist in solving the mine problem in the region. They are: the United Nations, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the Ottawa Convention, the Stability Pact for SE Europe, and the ITF. SEEMACC was also created as a regional mine action experts' initiative. The directors of national MACs in SE Europe have expressed their wish for cooperation in mine action in order to improve the mine action programs. Their intent was shown in the agreement on the establishment of SEEMACC. Directors of the Albanian, Croatian and BiH MACs, as well as the ITF signed the agreement on November 11, 2000. Later, on November 30th, 2001, the agreement was signed by Montenegro and Yugoslavia MACs. On February 14th, 2002, the process was continued when Azerbaijan became a full member of SEEMACC. The signatories emphasized the need for cooperation and support in the following fields:

- Exchange of experience, expertise

and knowledge in the field of mine action in SE Europe and the field of training deminers and managing personnel.

- Promotion of the regional approach in the planning of demining programs and in the fundraising for mine action.
- Exchange of information on testing of the new technologies in demining.
- Promotion of the achievement of common standards and accreditation procedures in the field of demining in SE Europe.

### SEEMACC Vision

The SEEMACC vision is to make SE Europe mine-free by 2010, where the economical and social development will not be impeded by the threat of mines.

### SEEMACC Mission

The mission is to develop sustainable regional programs that will contribute to the mine-contaminated countries developing the capacities to demine and return the land to the local populations and enable economic, agricultural and tourism development. The programs are designed to prevent mine incidents, rehabilitate mine victims, help national programs to raise awareness of the mine problem, develop new technologies for mine detection, reduce mine-affected areas, train and educate experts in the region and raise necessary funds. Assistance to national programs in developing common standards, procedures and techniques of demining through the introduction of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards will be based on the experiences from the region. Also included in SEEMACC's mission is the development of common resources for training of EOD and demining personnel including management, the testing of demining technologies and the training of mine detection dogs (MDDs).

### SEEMACC Basic Principles

The principles are setting the framework for the values and policies that the mine action activities will abide by in SE Europe. Mine action is presenting all the aspects of national strategy for solving the mine problems in each country. The main



goal of mine action is to re-establish the safe environment that will enable the revitalization, reconstruction and development of the communities. The basic humanitarian principles of neutrality and humanity have to be respected in solving the mine problem so that the most mine-affected communities are helped first. The principle of partnership includes the cooperation with the United Nations, especially the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and UNDP, the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and donors in each phase of mine action activities in order to integrate expertise, experience and recommendations into mine action of the region.

### *SEEMACC Strategic Goals and Tasks*

The strategy involves six strategic goals in 27 tasks reflecting the needs expressed in mine-affected communities. The six goals are listed below (to see the complete list of tasks, check out the SEEMAC website at <http://www.see-demining.org/main.htm> and click on the introduction heading and go to "strategy," where the complete SEEMAC strategy is listed).

1. Retain the donors in SE Europe
2. Develop prioritization methodology
3. Develop and adopt regional operative standards
4. Train personnel in the region
5. Implement a unified mine information system

6. Test new demining technologies and machines

### **Conclusion**

There is significant public and political awareness of the mine problem and the enormous impact that landmines have on safety, as well as on the humanitarian, economic and environmental development of SE Europe. The real victims are civilians—mines impede the return of the population to their homes and prevent the production of necessary resources, even in the pure areas. Populations living in mine-contaminated areas need to see the mine threat reduced. Then perhaps, the establishment and maintenance of peace, the reintegration of refugees and returnees, the revitalization and reconstruction of communities and even the economic development of SE Europe, will soon become a reality.

The regional approach of SEEMACC presents an important development in the cooperation of the region and is also beneficial to solving the mine problem in the region at a faster pace through exchange of experience, expertise, lessons-learned and regional pooling of resources. It is also promoting post-conflict political rehabilitation in the region. SEEMAC's approach can be an example to be followed in other regions of the world. ■

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*\*All graphics courtesy of author.*

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