

Opening Remarks of

Ms. Selma Gušo, Advocate and Survivor from Bosnia and Herzegovina

21st International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers

Geneva, 13 – 16 February 2018

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, allow me to share my appreciation to UNMAS, Humanity & Inclusion (former Handicap International) and government of Australia for giving me an opportunity to participate and to stand here in front of you, as a survivor from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It's now 20 years since I became a victim of landmine. One pleasant visit on a Sunday evening to a country side near Sarajevo changed my life. It was around 5 p.m. when we were walking back when I heard an explosion and felt something hot sliding down my leg. I went down to see better and realised that my heel was hanging by the thread. I was a child, but still, I couldn't believe what was happening to me. I looked at my three year old cousin and I saw that her leg was bleeding too. In a blink of an eye, we both lost our limbs and I knew that my childhood will never be the same. I was so afraid, but surprisingly I didn't cry at all.

The following day everything was different. When I woke up in the hospital and looked under the bed cover, I saw that my leg was missing. It was no longer there. I felt enormous amount of sorrow, asking myself why I was punished that way. My cousin was laying in the bed next to me. We looked at each other and couldn't talk.

When I look at my life now, reflecting on my life before and after the accident, I can see a lot of ups and downs. Road of recovery was very difficult, I remember the first time I was fitting my new leg and the pain that I felt. I was afraid how would my friends react, because then I felt that I was not equal as them as one of my body parts was missing. Today, I feel that my life is not different at all. With the support of my family and friend, I became strong women. I am a graduated journalist, Professional swimmer and active member in my community. Still, I didn't manage to get appropriate employment in my country.

But as I stand here today, I cannot not to think about thousands of survivors and their family members, people still living in affected areas and challenges they face every day. My accident happened three years after the war has ended. That is why, I have few requests that I would like to share with you today:

- Countries contaminated by landmines end ERW, like my country Bosnia and Herzegovina and many others, are reaching final deadlines, but are still facing a lot of challenges to reach 2025 objective. To prevent further accident of landmines, I call all of you here to work harder and faster to reach this objective and to make world free of mines by 2025.

- My story and road to recovery was a successful one because I had access to emergency medical care and I was provided adequate support. Today far too many casualties die for reasons that are perfectly preventable if proper first aid, emergency medical transport and trauma surgery were to be available. Remember that there are many survivors today that still need support, so while you are taking out the landmines and destroying them, making sure that people can walk freely and use the land, please do not forget that the needs of victims will stay the same. Mine free is not a victim free.
- Better survivors' participation on both, national and international level is most necessary! I was expecting to exchange more experiences with more survivors from other affected countries and listen to their stories. Survivors should be part of national delegations as well.
- Donors have invested tremendous efforts allocating funding for the implementation of the Mine Ban (ben) Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In this last stretch we need to see more international funding, but also more commitments from the affected states. And victim assistance earmarked funding should be increased.
- More states should join both treaties. There is no single reason to produce, use, transfer or stockpile these indiscriminate weapons. Therefore, I call all the states that have done so, to join both treaties.

Before I leave the stage, I would like to challenge you all here, working to reach the 2025 goal, to find answers to these questions this week:

- How can we work better?
- How can we work faster?
- How we can raise more funding?
- How can you - as the mine action community - engage other actors so that the delivery of life and limb saving measures are seen as their responsibility as well?
- How to make sure that the needs of all victims are met?

Thank you