



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Canadian Ambassador announces new Bosnian demining project for CIDC during ceremony to hand over community land cleared of landmines in 2005**

#### **Nova Scotia-based organization celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

*(Bosanski Brod, 01 March, 2006)* Canadian Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Shelley Whiting, participated today in a ceremony to handover certificates marking the successful completion of demining activities near Bosanski Brod, a city on Bosnia and Herzegovina's border with Croatia. The certificates were presented by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BH MAC) to Mr. Vid Ivanović, Mayor of Bosanski Brod. The Government of Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contributed \$750,000 to the demining work that was carried out by the Canadian International Demining Corps (CIDC), a Nova Scotia-based charitable organization. Also on hand for the ceremony were representatives of BH MAC and the United Nations Development Program, as well as CIDC Chairman, Irving Schwartz, and Balkans Program Director for CIDC, Oliver Mitrevski.

Ambassador Whiting stated: "Through this contribution the Government of Canada is continuing its strong support for demining activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This ceremony demonstrates how the goals and ideals of the Ottawa Convention can be translated into practical realities. By clearing land in Bosanski Brod of mines and unexploded ordnance, we have enhanced the security of local residents, created conditions enabling refugees to return home, and assisted in returning land to productive use". Ambassador Whiting also announced a further contribution of \$150,000 for demining activities in Ljubinje under an arrangement with the Slovenia-based International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF). This work will also be carried out by CIDC.

"We are proud to have CIDC as our implementing partner for these demining activities. CIDC has been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a number of years – training mine detection dog teams, as well as undertaking demining work in numerous communities. Through their work they are assisting this country to move closer to its goal of being free from the effects of landmines. I am especially pleased that Mr. Irving Schwartz, Chairman of CIDC is also able to participate in this ceremony", noted Ambassador Whiting.

The contribution announced today for Ljubinje and the funding for the Bosanski Brod activities are in addition to the previously announced \$4.5 million Canadian Government contribution to landmine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CIDC Chairman, Irving Schwartz, said he was delighted to be able to attend the ceremony and he congratulated Bosnian authorities and international donors on the fact that approximately 11 million square meters of land had been cleared of landmines in 2005. He said: “This represents a significant increase over previous years, and CIDC is pleased to be part of this important humanitarian and development effort.” Mr. Schwartz thanked Ambassador Whiting for the strong support CIDC has always received from the Canadian Embassy in Sarajevo and from CIDA and Foreign Affairs Canada. Government of Canada funding for CIDC’s activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past seven years has exceeded \$3.5 million (or €2.5 million), and has enabled CIDC to train and equip several Bosnian organizations (including the Entity Armies and Civil Protection demining units) with 70 mine detection dogs, and to train and deploy about 80 Bosnian nationals for its own manual, mechanical and canine demining operations. Mr. Schwartz stated: “Next month CIDC will celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is therefore an ideal opportunity for me to thank all concerned, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Canada, for all the support and cooperation we have received over the years. During our seven years of continuous operation in this country we have spent about \$7 million (€5 million) on our various projects here, and in so doing we have developed strong local demining capabilities and capacities for the long-term. As evidence of our success I would point to the fact that in 2005 CIDC demining teams cleared approximately 1 million square meters of land, and the mine detection dog teams we supplied to other organizations were involved in the clearance of an additional 450,000 square meters. In fact, I believe about half of all the mine detection dog teams currently operational in Bosnia and Herzegovina were trained and supplied by CIDC.” Mr. Schwartz noted however that there was a great deal of work still to be done to clear over 18,000 suspected mined areas throughout the country, and to continue to reduce civilian casualties (approximately 4,900 in total since 1992 - one of the latest being in Ljubinje where a landmine recently claimed the life of a local shepherd, and where CIDC will be working next with the newly announced funding from the Government of Canada). “I therefore urge all concerned to ensure that adequate resources continue to be made available for demining efforts in the years ahead. For our part we are determined to do all that we can.” he added.

CIDC Program Director, Oliver Mitrevski, confirmed that CIDA’s contribution of \$750,000 for the Bosanski Brod project had enabled CIDC to build (locally) a \$200,000 mechanical ground-preparation demining machine, and to train, equip and deploy teams of deminers to clear land in Bosanski Brod and numerous other locations throughout the country. “As the manager of this program and as a Bosnian citizen I am thankful to Canada for this generous and practical support. Working with Canadians and with BH MAC, UNDP, ITF, and military and civil protection demining units, we are making a real difference by improving the personal security and general well-being of Bosnians from all regions and all ethnicities. It’s clear that we have developed important partnerships for effective ongoing landmine action throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are proud of our accomplishments and we plan to continue working until all areas in the country are ultimately rendered mine-free” he said.

*For further information please contact:*

Name	David Horton	Oliver Mitrevski
Position	Executive Director	Program Director (Balkans)
E-Mail	<a href="mailto:davidhorton@cidc.ws">davidhorton@cidc.ws</a>	<a href="mailto:mdd@teol.net">mdd@teol.net</a>
Phone	+ 1 902 567 5683	+ 387 65 583 253
Fax	+ 1 902 539 3224	+ 387 59 273 391