

AMCHAM BIH HANDS OVER BH MAC 238,321.91 US DOLLARS CHECK

American Chamber of Commerce in BiH (AmCham BiH) organized on January 28, 2009 a solemn reception in Sarajevo for donators of global humanitarian event a "Night of a Thousand Dinners 2008", which also included awarding of a symbolic check to BH Mine Action Center (MAC).

The reception was attended by donors of the "Night of a Thousand Dinners 2008" fund raising, representatives of AmCham BiH, representatives of the American and Canadian Embassies in Sarajevo along with BH MAC representatives.

The symbolic check amounting to 238, 321, 91 US dollar has been handed over on behalf of Amcham BiH to BH MAC director Dušan Gavran by First Vice President of the AmCham BiH Edin Fetahović.

"The "Night of a Thousand Dinners 2008" achieved a great success. The raised amount is really big due to the specific purpose it is intended for," American Ambassador to BiH Charles English stated. English stressed that all collected money "is worth spending in order to face the danger from the existing mines in BiH".

He added that the danger posed by mines in BiH represents a major problem and that BiH Government along with the international organizations cannot resolve this issue by themselves. English also stressed that US Government will give the same amount to the already collected amount of funds.

"At this ceremony we are not only marking the hand-over of the check worth the amount of money that represents support to mine cleansing in BiH, we are also celebrating the partnership between the private and public sector aimed at the same goal, a partnership we hope will continue," he said.

English added that US Embassy to BiH and US Government will gladly and with pride continue supporting the realization of this goal.

"It is a global effort in the form of fund raising, organized in 50 countries and the event that happened in Sarajevo was one of the most important ones in all these countries," Canadian Ambassador to BiH David Hutchins stated.

He expressed his pleasure due to the fact that the sum of the money being collected increases every year . "Since 2001 onwards the generosity of the donors increases and this shows how much work we still have to do," Hutchins stated.

He added that a "Night of a Thousand Dinners" owes its success to the impetus and energy of AmCham BiH which invests every year great efforts in order to organize this event.

"The business community is the one that is taking a step forward and through generous donations considerably contributes to the joint goal which is BiH cleansed from mines", he emphasized.

"It is a widely known fact that the mine pollution problem is present in BiH and that it represents one of the state priorities. During the 1996-2008 period about 100 square kilometres have been demined, and an area encompassing 4,200 square km suspected of being mined has been reduced today to 1,636 square kilometres of land," BiH Minister of Civil Affairs Sredoje Nović stated. According to him, last year a suspicious area encompassing 142 square kilometres has been cleansed from mines.

He added that the productivity of the demining operations in BiH in the past few years continuously increased and that according to the 2008 report it amounts to 15 square km of demined area per year, which in comparison to the previous years represents a great progress in this field.

"According to the existing capacities, the productivity could amount to 30 square km per year, with adequate additional financing," Nović stated.

He stressed that despite all the undertaken measures on demining and warning about the danger from mines, mines took the toll of 39 victims last year out of which 19 persons

with fatal consequences.

Nović emphasized that upcoming years are crucial for BiH, and added that this year marked the beginning of the ten year long period for meeting of the conditions necessary for complete removal of the remaining mine fields.

"According to the new strategic document, it is estimated that this goal will be achieved in 2019 and that for the realization of the goal there is a need of provision of funds that on average amount to about 80 millions KM per year," he stressed.

He stated that with the fortified personal financing, the tempo of demining in BiH will considerably be increased during the next few years, but that during this process it is being counted on a very strong support of the donor community, that ought to remain at the same or even a higher level during the next four or five years where the yearly donation will on average amount from 13 to 16 million euros.

"At the same time starting from this year, BiH intends to increase its own sources in order to realize this strategy. Difficult economic situation in the world and BiH almost disabled BiH to allocate such considerable funds for this purpose in 2009, as it was planned," Nović concluded.