

## **Request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Submitted by Jordan**

**17 October 2008**

#### **What is the status of work conducted to date under Jordan's national demining programme?**

1. His Late Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal ordered the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) in 1993 to commence humanitarian demining operations. Conflicts with neighbouring countries in 1948, again from 1967-1969 and finally in the 1970's resulted in the presence of approximately 60 million square metres of Suspected Hazardous Area (SHA), divided into 500 minefields containing roughly 305,000 mines being laid on Jordanian soil. Of this total nearly 216,000 were anti-personnel mines (APMs) and 89,000 were classified as anti-vehicle mines (AVMs).
2. Through the period 1993-2007, 129,800 APMs were removed along with an additional 41,897 AVMs and approximately 40,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Spatially, 16 million square metres were cleared and an additional 34 million square metres was cancelled through the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation's (NCDR's) land release program; leaving approximately 10 million square metres along the northern border containing close to 136,000 landmines.
3. The consequences of past conflicts impacted Jordan's economy and its social development, while posing a major humanitarian threat to approximately 500,000 people (8% of Jordan's population) who lived in close proximity to these minefields. Some poor souls naturally fell prey to landmines. According to the national victim database, there have been 755 reported accidents (640 survivors, 115 fatalities) between 1948 and 2007. Victims were usually civilians carrying out their daily duties of herding or cultivation, or military personnel whose injuries were the result of demining or routine patrol activities. The majority of Jordan's 500 minefields were located in its most fertile land, namely the Jordan Valley. And this naturally constituted a major impediment to the development of the area, as well as added stress and worry for some of Jordan's poorest citizens, who could not access their own land for agricultural use.
4. As a result, His Late Majesty King Hussein became more determined that Jordan had to demonstrate ownership of its landmine problem, and its commitment to ridding its land of the scourge of landmines by being one of the first Arab countries to accede in 1998 to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), which it subsequently ratified later that year. Jordan did not accede to the APMBC for the sake of publicity or in order to seek the approval of others, but rather was bent upon the idea of providing a safe environment for its citizens and caring for those who had been injured. Until the summer of 2007 Jordan remained the only country in the region to have acceded to the APMBC. And in compliance with article 4 of the APMBC Jordan destroyed its stockpile of 92,342 antipersonnel landmines in April 2003.

5. In 2000, a Royal Decree established the NCDR, which the government subsequently legislated into law. The purpose of creating the NCDR was to entrust mine action in Jordan with civilian leadership that had more access to the international mine action community. The organization however did not become fully operational until 2004, whereupon a new administration was appointed to lead the organization and to jumpstart Jordan's mine action efforts. In 2006, the NCDR realized that the pace of its humanitarian demining operations would not be sufficient to meet its Article 5 obligations to the APMBC, and as a result solicited the assistance of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) to carry out demining operations in the south of Jordan, while the Royal Engineering Corps (REC) continued its operations in the Jordan Valley. Jordan has contributed annually to its own mine clearance in the past 15 years and international funding has increased dramatically since 2004. Jordan developed a National Mine Action Plan for the period 2005 -2009, which clearly outlined the kingdom's mine action initiatives. This plan formed the basis upon which NCDR has solicited support from donor nations.
6. As for the prevention of further accidents, the REC have since 1993 clearly fenced and marked all minefields in Jordan to prevent the civilian population from gaining entry, and continue to carry out monthly checks and maintenance on these fences and markings. A Mine Risk Education (MRE) program was also launched in 2007. Through its two key activities, 'public education' and 'community mine action liaisons' 16,000 individuals have so far benefited directly from the MRE sessions, while indirect MRE activities target approximately 75,000 individuals through exhibitions, distribution of printed materials and home visits during needs assessment and risk-taking behaviour studies.
7. Furthermore, NCDR established in 2006 a Quality Management Team (QMT) to carry out and oversee quality control and quality assurance of all demining activities being carried out by the REC and the NPA in Jordan. The QMT undergoes regular training in capacity development, and has increased in number to 18 members in order to meet the needs of the increased demining activities. Jordan utilizes the latest methods and standards for demining, technical survey, quality assurance and quality control. These methods and standards are based on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), modified in accordance with the landmine situation in the kingdom. In addition, Jordan has established a method used for cancelling, with confidence, mine suspected areas that are ultimately considered not to be dangerous.
8. With regards to legislation, the NCDR established a committee in 2006 with members from inside and outside the organization who represented the Ministry of Justice, the Military Judicial Department, the General Intelligence Department, Jordan University and the ICRC to study and examine the existing laws in Jordan as they pertained to landmines and Jordan's legislative obligations vis-à-vis the APMBC. The committee concluded that Jordan did have laws that addressed landmines but that a new law had to be enacted that would place Jordan in full compliance with the APMBC. The law was subsequently drafted and legislated into law in March 2008 as the 'National Mine Ban Law.'
9. Lastly, it must be noted that Jordan took on the huge task of hosting the 8th Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention (8MSP). The reason it decided to do so was to spread the message throughout the Middle East that landmines had to be eradicated and to bolster its own endeavours in mine action. In addition, the hope was that hosting the conference in Jordan would raise the profile of mine action in the Jordan Article 5 region

and encourage States not Party to the APMBC that are mine-affected and those that are not to accede to the Convention. The conference was a big success and clearly showed Jordan's seriousness in dealing with the issue of landmines.

**What are the circumstances that impede Jordan from destroying all anti-personnel mines in mined areas by its deadline?**

10. Jordan will be unable to fulfil its Article 5 obligations by its deadline, 1 May 2009, for several reasons that are listed below:

- a. *Mine Action was orchestrated solely by the military during the early years:* During the period 1993 – 2004 the JAF managed mine action in Jordan to the best of its ability. The intentions were always noble but the capacity to achieve great strides in demining was absent. Moreover, the military found the very high costs of demining to be exceedingly exorbitant and soon was unable to finance clearance at the expected pace and breadth. And since the military was in the forefront of mine action during this period, donor nations for the most part shied away from contributing the much-needed support, as they preferred to assist only credible civilian run operations.
- b. *No effective 'Mine Action Authority' till 2004:* During the first five year period post Jordan's accession to the Convention, no 'effective' mine action authority existed. NCDR had in fact been established some years earlier (2000), but had been immediately plagued with bureaucratic problems and weak management. As a result, the military continued to fill the gap, as is mentioned above, by doing the best that it could in clearance and providing overall leadership. However, 2004 marked a turning point in the life of the NCDR, as a new chairman, a new board of directors, a new director and a UNDP Chief Technical Advisor were appointed to the organization and were given the challenging mandate of expediting mine clearance, raising capacity, and streamlining all aspects of mine action. This decision by the Jordanian Government to take more ownership of the mine problem by providing new civilian leadership to the NCDR that had the capacity to make changes and produce results made all the difference. Since then the NCDR has been an effective and robust organization that has provided mine action in Jordan with sound leadership.
- c. *Big increase in partnerships occurred only after 2004:* Prior to 2004 there was limited contact with the vibrant international mine action community in the area of partnerships. The JAF received limited funding for equipment and machines, but did not benefit greatly from the advances being made in humanitarian mine action on the management, technical, and institutional levels. Thus, the limited exposure to vibrant knowledge and donor networks reduced the potential outputs that could have been produced by the REC.
- d. *Technical reasons:* The extreme flooding and erosion in the Jordan Valley slowed the demining process tremendously. Given the nearness of populations to the minefields in the valley the REC took extra precautions – sometimes excavating up to 3 meters of shifted soil – to ensure all mines were located along the river bank and in the fertile floodplains which are heavily used for agriculture by small landholders and pastoralists.

- e. *Northern Border Mine Belt was left till the end due to its complexity & difficulty:*  
Since this demining task was considered the most difficult to undertake due to the high volume of landmines and erratic mine laying patterns that it had – a decision was taken to leave it till the end. In addition, the plan to demine the area took some time to come together because it could not be considered as a separate project but rather had to be viewed in conjunction with the emplacement of an alternative border security system - the details of which have since been finalized. Added to this and another cause for concern and delay, has been the outstanding border dispute between Jordan and Syria that still remains unresolved.

**What is the proposed duration for the extension and what are reasons for this amount of time?**

11. According to the best estimate of the NCDR, NPA and the REC it will take no less than four years to physically undertake the demining of Jordan's last remaining mined area (the Northern Border Mine Belt) starting 1 April 2008. In other words, the duration of the extension requested is **three years** beyond Jordan's deadline according to the APMBC: **1 May 2009 – 1 May 2012**.
12. In this particular project the number of assets allocated to the clearance effort is of course important but not considered a critical factor since the operator prefers to utilise a 'smaller' team of highly qualified deminers and maintain total control of the area of operation rather than have many demining teams with less control. This is the view of the operator and the NCDR because the minefields in question are extremely dangerous and difficult to demine and safety issues must at all time be paramount.

**What are the humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implications of the extension?**

13. The humanitarian, social, economic and environmental implications of the extension period requested are enormous since the Northern Border Mine Belt is situated in near proximity to numerous border towns and communities. For this reason, the NCDR recently conducted in conjunction with NPA, a 'Landmine Retrofit Study' that analysed the whole area in detail. Some of the study's most notable findings are as follows:
14. Out of 48 identified communities 34 were deemed to be suffering because of mines; affecting the lives of 63,000 people. The main livelihoods of impacted communities are grazing and agriculture. Mines continue to block around 10.5 million square metres thus hindering human development. It was voiced in all impacted villages that the extreme shortage of land was a major concern since all land in the eastern area in particular is individually owned. In November 2006, the area was declared an economic free zone, thus tripling the value of land.

**What is Jordan's plan to fulfil its obligations during the extension period?**

15. The NCDR is very confident that with its strong network of local and international partnerships it will succeed in accomplishing its clearance obligations within the time requested. Especially due to the fact that all the elements for success are present, i.e. political will, ownership, good planning, technical expertise and capacity, good coordination & leadership, manpower, and most importantly finances.

16. And due to the success of NPA's clearance activities in the south of Jordan (the Wadi Araba region) over the course of the last two years, the NCDR decided to task NPA with the clearance of the Northern Mine Belt as well. Even though NPA are the sole executors of the demining, the whole operation has been very carefully planned and coordinated with the NCDR and the REC.
17. Additionally, this demining project is like no other because it is part of a much larger project that of the new border security system that will be emplaced where the minefields once existed. In essence, the project will have three phases: the demining that will be conducted by NPA, the immediate quality assurance and verification that will be conducted by the NCDR's 'Quality Management Team,' and then finally the emplacement to the new security system by REC. Added to this will be another dimension that of securing the border (the breaches) by the military whilst the demining is ongoing. A more detailed presentation of the challenges and work plan to overcome them is presented in the Annex section.
18. As for the outstanding border dispute between Jordan and Syria, the issue pertains primarily to the western half of the mine belt and therefore demining operations will commence with the eastern half of the mine belt first. The hope is of course that the border dispute will have been resolved by the time demining operations are due to start on the western portion of the mine belt.
19. The Jordanian leadership has engaged the Syrian authorities on this issue and a joint Jordanian – Syrian commission has been created in order to expedite the matter and to agree on the demarcation of the final border.

**What are the financial and technical means available to Jordan to fulfil its obligations during the extension period?**

20. The NCDR will manage the North Border Project (NBP) and provide QM over the demining process, which will be implemented by NPA. The REC will lend EOD support and be responsible for constructing the replacement border security system. Building on a recent history of strong international support (Annex I) NCDR has been able to mobilize \$13 million for the NBP through a consortium of six donors, namely: Australia, Canada, EC, Germany, Japan, and Norway.