

Analysis of the request submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention

29 October 2008

1. Venezuela ratified the Convention on 14 April 1999. The Convention entered into force for Venezuela on 1 October 1999. In its initial transparency report submitted on 10 September 2002, Venezuela reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Venezuela is obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 October 2009. Venezuela, believing that it will be unable to do so by that date submitted on 31 March 2008 to the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties (8MSP) a request for an extension of its deadline. Venezuela's request is for five years (until 1 October 2014).
2. The request indicates that at entry into force of the Convention for Venezuela there were 13 mined areas containing 1,074 anti-personnel mines and totalling 180,000 square meters around 6 naval bases on Venezuela's border with Colombia. The request further indicates that mines in these areas were emplaced in February 1995 in a consistent manner and that the areas in question were registered and fenced.
3. The request indicates that the 13 mined areas totalling 180,000 square metres mentioned above remain to be addressed during the extension period. On 24 April 2008, the 8MSP President requested additional information from Venezuela with respect to the preparation and status of work conducted under national demining programmes, as stipulated in Article 5.4(i). Venezuela responded by indicating that since ratification of the Convention, Venezuela had carried out research activities and studies with a view to proceeding effectively with clearance work, that a geographical information system has been set up, that secondary fencing has been installed to further ensure the effective exclusion of civilians and that the areas in question have been regularly inspected. The States Parties mandated to analyse requests submitted under Article 5 of the Convention (hereafter referred to as "the analysing group") noted that, while Venezuela reported that preparatory work had been undertaken, it had not reported any mine clearance since entry into force.
4. As noted, Venezuela's request is for five years (until 1 October 2014) on the basis that demining work principally can be conducted only from February to June of each year, that in 2008 administrative actions, surveys, planning and the restructuring of standing operating procedures (SOPs) would be undertaken and mechanical demining equipment acquired, that in 2009 specialised personnel would be selected and trained and logistics would be organised and that in 2010 the first destruction of mines in mined areas would take place.
5. The request indicates the following as impeding circumstances: (a) The naval bases to be addressed are located on border areas with Colombia, with military personnel and civilians in the region under constant threat by irregular groups; (b) The mined areas are in a region characterised by long periods of rain leading to flooding, which makes it impossible to carry out reconnaissance and clearance operations; (c) Access to the areas in question through roadways is precarious and in part of the year many of these areas are

only accessible via rivers; (d) There has been a need to acquire mechanical equipment and (e) There is a need for the permanent availability of a helicopter for emergency medical evacuation, which demands optimal weather conditions.

6. The analysing group noted that by not proceeding with mine clearance as soon as possible after entry into force, Venezuela could not fulfil its Article 5 obligations by its deadline. The analysing group further noted that, while taking into account all impending circumstances, these should not prevent Venezuela from fulfilling Article 5 obligations as soon as possible.
7. The request indicates which areas will be dealt with during each year of the requested extension period. From February to May 2010, the mined areas (40,000 square metres in total) at the Puerto Paez Navy Post will be cleared with priority attributed to this location as a result of it having the best accessibility. In November and December 2010, the mined areas (20,000 square metres in total) at the Guafitas Navy Post will be cleared, followed by the mined areas (20,000 square metres in total) at the Atabapo Navy Post in 2011, the mined area (20,000 square metres) at the Rio Arauca Navy Post in 2012, the mined areas (40,000 square metres in total) at the Cararabo Navy Post in 2013 and the mined area (40,000 square metres) at the Isla Vapor Navy Post in 2014.
8. The request indicates that Venezuela plans to clear its mined areas through manual, mechanical and canine demining, that it is revising its SOPs in accordance with international mine action standards and that it is acquiring equipment. The request further mentions methods and standards of controlling and assuring quality. Also, the request indicates that Venezuela will establish a National Demining Structure that integrates the Army Corps of Engineers, Naval Corps of Engineers, and the Armament Directorates in order to combine efforts and ensure the efficient and effective execution of mine clearance operations.
9. The request indicates that Venezuela projects the costs for implementation of Article 5 during the requested extension period to total approximately 30 million Bolivares Fuertes (i.e., approximately US\$ 13.97 million). The request further indicates that Venezuela will cover the entire cost of operations, updating the budget as necessary. The analysing group noted the commitment of Venezuela to assume all costs related to implementation.
10. The request indicates that the mined areas have not had a negative social, humanitarian, or environmental impact, that all mined areas are fenced and monitored and that to date there has been only one incident, which resulted from an imprudent act by a member of the armed forces.
11. The request includes other relevant information that may be of use to the States Parties in assessing and considering the request including an annual projections of the areas to be released each year between 2009 and 2014 as well as reasons for prioritizing the tasks during the particular time frame, detailed set of tables illustrating the status, location and size of each area in question, maps illustrating the location of these areas, mined area maps and pictures of the areas to be addressed.
12. The analysing group noted that, while no demining had taken place in Venezuela since entry into force Venezuela had nevertheless made a clear commitment through its extension request to start mine clearance operations and ultimately comply with its

obligations by 1 October 2014. The analysing group further noted that, while impeding circumstances listed by Venezuela in its request would continue to exist during the extension period, with speedy establishment of a demining program and acquisition of mechanical demining assets, Venezuela may find itself in a situation wherein it could complete implementation before October 2014. The analysing group added that doing so could benefit the Convention.

13. The analysing group noted that the accounting of annual milestones of progress to be achieved would greatly assist both Venezuela and all States Parties in assessing progress in implementation during the extension period. In this regard, the analyzing group further noted that both could benefit if Venezuela provided updates relative to this accounting of areas at meetings of the Standing Committees, at the Second Review Conference and at Meetings of the States Parties.