

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 Yemen

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Background

1. Over the past thirty years, Yemen has been plagued with a number of conflicts (1962-1969; 1970-1983; and in 1994) that have resulted in a significant and deadly legacy of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.
2. Yemen is committed to the complete elimination of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) was established in June 1998 to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine-action strategy. Furthermore, the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) was established in January 1999 as the implementing body of the NMAC with the primary responsibility of coordinating all mine-action activities in the country. The aim of the current Strategic Mine Action Plan is to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines.
3. A nationwide Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was completed in July 2000. The LIS identified a total of 1,078 mined areas with a reported surface area of 922,726,881 square metres, mainly in the central and southern regions of the country. In 2002, 7 additional mined areas with a total size of 100,400 square metres were identified. In 2006, 3 additional mined areas with a total size of 505,000 square metres were identified. Hence, in total 1,088 areas totalling 923,332,281 square metres have been of concern to Yemen.
4. By January 2008, 631 areas totalling 710,103,911 square metres had been released, with 108,974 anti-personnel mines destroyed and 457 areas totalling 213,228,369 square metres remained to be addressed.

Humanitarian, social and economic implications:

5. The LIS recorded a total of 4,904 casualties in the years leading up to the survey, of which 2,560 were killed and 2,344 injured. Since entry into force, annual rates of recorded casualties have not come anywhere near these numbers. Nevertheless, between 1999 and 2007 there were 129 recorded casualties of explosive remnants of war including 5 deaths and 47 injuries resulting from anti-personnel mines. Completing Article 5 obligations during the extension period will result in no new casualties.
6. The LIS identified 18 mine-affected governorates out of the 19 governorates in Yemen. In total, 592 communities in 95 districts were found to have a landmine and/or UXO problem. An estimated 828,000 people were living in those affected

communities. In addition, in 2002 three additional affected communities were identified. As a result of work undertaken by Yemen, by the end of 2007 it was estimated that the total affected populations was 580,212 persons. Fulfilling Article 5 obligations during the extension period will result in the population affected by anti-personnel mines being reduced to zero.

7. The landmine and UXO problem has had a serious impact on access to critical resources, blocking access to grazing land, agricultural land and water sources for drinking and irrigation. It has also impeded infrastructure development and the implementation of social development projects in affected communities.

Impeding circumstances:

8. While Yemen had planned to fulfil its obligations by March 2009, it will be unable to do so because of the following circumstances:
 - a. Extent of the challenge and competition for scarce development resources: at entry into force, Yemen was one of the most mine-affected countries in the world with over 1,000 suspected hazardous areas identified. The ability of Yemen to address its widespread implementation challenge has been complicated by the fact that Yemen is a country with one of the world's lowest human development scores. A high population growth rate of (e.g., 3.02% in 2004) has compounded Yemen's development challenges with population growth meaning increased demand for water, employment, education and primary health care.
 - b. Insufficient funding: while Yemen is a poor country, it has provided more than 50 percent of the resources obtained for Yemen to implement Article 5 through in-kind contributions of staff, facilities and social benefits for the national staff. The amount of external funding required to complement Yemen's national contribution often has not kept pace with demands. Shortages in funding have occasionally forced Yemen to stop or delay some activities until receiving the funding. For example, an unexpected shortfall of funds caused delays in work in some years affected the ability of Yemen to replace equipment, delay planned deployments of clearance and explosive ordnance disposal units and quality assurance and monitoring / evaluation team, and delay the planned restructuring of clearance units.
 - c. Lack of technologies: Yemen has lacked the latest demining technology to deal with magnetic and iron soils. This type of soil is located in 4 mined areas with a total area of 10,945,000 square metres in two governorates. Yemen also faces a problem with deep buried mines, covered by up to two to six metres of sand dunes. These mines are located in four areas in three governorates with a total area of 41,480,000 square metres.
 - d. Geography and climate: Yemen's geography places challenges on demining operations as mined areas are in mountain areas, deserts and areas where shifting sands are prevalent. Moreover, windy and rainy season restrict mine clearance operations in some regions.

Duration of the proposed extension:

9. Yemen strived to fulfil its obligations by its 1 March 2009 deadline and thereby contribute to putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war in all mine-affected areas by March 2009. However, as a result of the above mentioned obstacles, progress in implementation was slowed. A six year extension of Yemen's deadline (to 1 March 2015) will enable Yemen to complete implementation of Article 5.