

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 Zimbabwe

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1. Zimbabwe still has 813.3 km² of land contaminated with anti-personnel mines. The clearing efforts that started soon after independence in 1980 have seen 306.6 km² cleared from an initial contaminated area of 1 119.9 km², recovering 33 032 AP mines in the process. Zimbabwe is doing everything possible within its capacity and without any meaningful international support to rid itself of anti-personnel mines in compliance with the Convention and to facilitate national development.
2. The anti-personnel mines in the country were laid during the war of liberation, which lasted up to 1980, when Zimbabwe gained independence from the British. At independence, the new government of Zimbabwe inherited numerous mined areas within the country and six well-marked minefields along its borders with Zambia on the North and Mozambique on the East and South East. The minefields covering a total area of 1071.4 square kilometres were estimated to contain a total of 2 605 400 AP mines of the following types: Ploughshear, VS 50, R2M2, Carrot, R1M1 and M972. Apart from the marked minefields, other smaller minefields were discovered either during clearance of the marked minefield or when reported by the locals.
3. With assistance from the United States of America, Zimbabwe cleared the Victoria Falls to Mlibizi minefield, which was 286 km² in length. However, the support dried up or was abruptly stopped after one and half years of operations, leaving the Zimbabwean government to complete the clearance on its own - an operation that lasted a total of seven years. The EU also funded, during the same period, the clearance of Musengezi-Rwenya minefield by commercial deminers. Again, when funding abruptly dried up, the deminers left, leaving the job uncompleted. No quality assurance was done, and, as a result, the area cannot be considered safe.
4. The mines have caused untold suffering to the communities living in affected areas. Individuals are unable to carry out economic activities such as farming, and in some cases their livestock detonate mines. Since 1980, 1 550 people were reported killed or maimed and 120 000 livestock killed. The areas where the minefields were laid are remote, therefore, some casualties likely go unreported. The communities are denied a total of 45 700 ha of productive land. Tourism has also been affected, especially by the Sango Border Post to Crooks Corner minefield, where a tripartite (South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) game park was established. The operation of this park is affected by the presence of mines on the Zimbabwean side.
5. Zimbabwe established a National Mine Action Authority (NAMAZ) through an Act of Parliament, the Anti-Personnel Mines (Prohibition) Act Chapter 11:19, which is responsible for the general policy direction of mine action activities in the country. The Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre (ZIMAC) is responsible for planning and coordinating all mine action activities in the country. Currently, demining activities are undertaken by

military engineers. A squadron of six officers and 132 men (with 10 support staff) are currently deployed on humanitarian demining. Extensive mine risk education is carried out in the affected areas. A total of 25 000 people have been reached since 2004. These people include community leaders but most of them were woman and youth.

6. In carrying out demining operations, both mechanical and manual means have been applied. Safe lanes are opened first by driving a bulldozer across the minefield with its blade raised, thereby detonating some mines. This process is repeated at least three times. A survey team then moves in with mine detectors carrying out manual clearance of the safe lanes. The safe lanes opened are then the baseline for the subsequent manual demining operation.
7. Due to limited resources, Zimbabwe relies on old surveys conducted 1994. However, technical surveys are conducted on every area being demined. This way, Zimbabwe does not run a risk of spending time, effort and resources clearing an uncontaminated area. Zimbabwe recognises that it should carryout fresh surveys in all minefields to determine the correct and more accurate extent of the remaining contaminated area.
8. Zimbabwe would have made far much more progress on its obligation to clear the country of landmines if more resources had been made available. What has been achieved so far has largely been due to Zimbabwe's own efforts. If Zimbabwe continues at the current funding level of about US \$10,000 per year, Zimbabwe projects it could take more than 30 years to complete implementation of Article 5. In addition to a lack of international support, Zimbabwe has been impeded in fulfilling its obligations in a ten year period due to its isolation from the international mine action community. This isolation has resulted in Zimbabwe lagging behind in adopting up to date survey and demining techniques.
9. As a way forward we it will be appropriate if we resurvey all the remaining minefields while at the same time continue with demining of Sango Border Post to Crooks Corner minefield where we are engaged at the moment. This will allow us to come up with a more accurate extend of our mine problem and thereby estimate the resources, time and effort that will be required to clear. Zimbabwe is therefore requesting an initial 22 month extension of its deadline. By requesting a extension of the deadline until 1 January 2011, Zimbabwe intends to seek and receive international technical assistance in order to acquire up to date survey and demining techniques, to survey areas where the exact locations of mined areas are unknown, to develop a plan that takes into account advanced techniques and then to submit a subsequent request for a period of time to implement the plan. This subsequent extension request will include a time schedule and budget for implementing Article 5, including a projection of funds that may be required from the international community.