



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION**

**INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS**

**UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION**

Geneva, 7-8 June 2018

Distinguished delegates,

We would like to use this opportunity to underline that the Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to the full implementation of its obligations from the Anti - Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which is shown by the fact that AP mines are no longer produced in Serbia and the stockpiled AP mines have been destroyed.

The Republic of Serbia is also committed to the fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations, namely to the clearance of all the mined areas under its jurisdiction or control.

However, due to the fact that Serbia has been facing a number of difficulties, such as the lack of adequate financial resources, and presence of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other UXO in addition to mine contaminated areas, whose clearance also requires substantial financial resources, Serbia is in no position to meet its Article 5 obligation deadline.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States Parties, held in Vienna, December 2017, the Republic of Serbia expressed strong concerns that if donor funds were not urgently secured, the Republic of Serbia would not be in a position to fulfill its obligations by March 2019, namely we would have to submit the second extension request by latest March 2018.

Consequently, in March 2018, the Republic of Serbia applied for a second extension of the deadline for fulfilling its obligations to the Ottawa Convention for a period of 4 years, namely until 2023.

The remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and had not been planted in specific patterns. These are groups of mines, not minefields. All these circumstances aggravate survey and clearance efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

The Republic of Serbia is making efforts to solve the problems related to mines and other explosive remnants of war and the Government, within its modest possibilities,

allocates funds for demining operations, but given the extent of the problem of mines and other explosive remnants of war, this is not enough to solve the overall mine problem.

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> MSP held in December 2017, to date, clearance of the area of 389,400 sqm was completed in the Municipality of Bujanovac - one project totaling 275, 800 sqm (Breznica Village, Bujanovac Municipality), with 3 AP mines and 1 UXO found and safely destroyed, and another project totaling 113,600 sqm (Ravno Bučje Village, Bujanovac Municipality) with 5 AP mines and 2 UXO found and safely destroyed.

These projects were funded by the 2017 Serbian State Budget for demining operations and, matched, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement donation.

In 2018, the Government of Serbia has allocated twice the funds from the state budget for demining operations than in previous years. We expect our Government to continue to allocate funds in the years of the requested extension.

We would like to take the opportunity to point out that demining does not only contribute to greater security of people and the environment, but also that it has social, economic and other aspects. Therefore, we especially appeal to the donors to help us solve this, for the Republic of Serbia and its citizens, a big problem.

Significant results have been achieved in the field of humanitarian demining in Serbia thanks to donor assistance and engagement of state authorities in Serbia.

We would also like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who helped us in the previous period.

We expect to continue our joint engagement until the complete demining of the Republic of Serbia.

We remain strongly committed to the accomplishment of a goal to make Serbia mine-free and will continue our demining operations for the area suspected to contain groups of mines, as of June totaling 2,240,940 sqm in the Municipality of Bujanovac, in order to primarily provide safety of local population.

As has been stated in our Extension Request Plan, the dynamics of implementation of our demining projects might be affected by provision of funds, that is if the funds for implementation of our projects are not provided, our plan will be directly affected and more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, if funds are provided, the work plan could be implemented in a shorter period.

The Republic of Serbia carries out a number of efforts to ensure that the civilians from affected communities are not injured by mines, cluster munitions and other UXO including through the following methods:

-Marking;

The whole area suspected to be contaminated with various types of mines has been visibly marked with “STOP UXO” signs in Serbian and Albanian languages, given that it is an area with multiethnic population. Areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, have been also marked correspondingly. Marking is conducted by the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) and within its regular activities the SMAC periodically visits contaminated locations making sure that these signs remain emplaced.

-Risk education;

Locals of the affected communities are being informed about demining activities through a number of means and media. Mine risk education has been conducted in schools and affected communities. In accordance with the IMAS, during demining operations, evacuation of people from houses, shops and other communal locations located within the zone of demining works is conducted. Suspension of traffic on the roads within the zone of demining operations is conducted, too. In relation to that, the SMAC coordinates activities with local authorities, school authorities and other relevant state bodies (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport), local media means in communities where demining operations are conducted.

The following methods, in accordance with the IMAS, have been employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- Non-technical survey
- Technical survey
- Clearance
- Mechanical demining
- Canine demining

There are a number of circumstances that present challenges for Serbia in complying with its Article 5 deadline.

Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

-Unregistered mine contaminated areas (groups of mines): The remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

-Climactic conditions: Contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays.

-Contamination other than mines: Specificity and complexity of the problem presents the fact that apart from mines still remaining in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO. All these unexploded ordnance are either remaining as a result of the 1999 bombing, or

are caused by an explosion and fire in a military depot, or are remaining from previous wars.

Distinguished delegates,

Lastly, allow me to avail ourselves of the opportunity to inform you that the Republic of Serbia has followed the recommendation of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance to engage itself in an individualized approach, that is, Serbia has accepted a Platform to hold a frank discussion with relevant stakeholders on the current status of Serbia's national programme, the needs and challenges in implementing its mine clearance and other obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its commitments under the Maputo Action Plan.

On the margins of the June 2018 Intersessional meeting, the Republic of Serbia has organized a meeting inviting potential donors, experts and other stakeholders, to attend the presentation aimed at raising attention to its problem and seeking adequate financial support to solve the pending Article 5 obligations.

We thank you for your kind attention.