

GICHD remarks on APMC Article 5 extension request submitted by the Republic of Tajikistan

Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
WMO Building, Geneva, 22 May 2019

Tajikistan is requesting a second extension for a period of five years and eight months. Whilst the request lists several reasons for requesting an extension it is evident that the main issue is the identification of several, previously unknown, suspected hazardous areas, totalling over 10 square kilometers. Even though the mine action programme exceeded its annual targets for land release it was not possible for it to achieve completion within the timeframe of the previous request. In the GICHD's view this is understandable.

The GICHD has noted that the extension request excludes an estimated 54 suspected hazardous areas which are believed to exist along Tajikistan's western border with Uzbekistan, and appreciates the sensitivities relating to the border area. Whilst the extension request establishes that progress has been made with Uzbekistan on the border issue, it may be prudent to include more detail on these discussions in the interests of transparency.

In order to achieve its stated goal Tajikistan asserts that the mine action programme will need to double its current clearance capacity over the extension period, increasing the country's demining staff from 90 to 180. It is commendable that the mine action centre is planning to secure the largest increase in human resources through the state budget by doubling the capacity currently provided by the Ministry of Defense. Such an increase to the operational capacity will also present an opportunity to build on the lessons learned from fielding female and mixed teams, and to improve the gender balance for deminers in line with the Gender and Diversity Mine Action Strategy for Tajikistan.

The extension request stresses that an annual financial contribution of 3 Million USD will be required to maintain operational capacity at the current level. In addition to this it would be useful to have a detailed understanding of the resources that will be required to double the clearance capacity, and to maintain these capacities throughout the length of the extension period.

The GICHD would like to reaffirm its commitment to supporting Tajikistan in its path to completion.