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REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE

12TH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES

CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND
TRANSFER OF ANTIPERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

3- 7 DECEMBER 2012

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to present the relevant information regarding actual status of fulfillment of obligations of the Republic of Serbia under the Article V of the Convention.

The Republic of Serbia is a State Party of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction since 2004. Serbia is committed to fully and timely implement its obligations under the Convention. This is confirmed by the fact that, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, Serbia neither produces, nor exports AP mines. The stockpiles of AP mines were destroyed in 2007, well before its 2014 deadline.

After the foundation of the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) as a national coordinating body for demining, a survey of the mine suspected area was conducted. At that time it was estimated that it was the area of 10.000.000 sqm in the border area with the Republic of Croatia, Municipality of Šid. The survey established that antipersonnel and antitank mines were emplaced in the area of 6.197.791 sqm. Given that it was not possible to remove only antipersonnel mines without removing antitank mines, the SMAC made demining projects, namely projects for clearance of all kinds and types of mines and other unexploded ordnance in the mined area totaling 6.197.791 sqm.

Demining of the mine contaminated area in the border area with Croatia, where 5.139 various types of mines and UXO were found and destroyed (3.997 AP, 842 AT and 300 UXO), was conducted owing to donations, which were, through the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) provided by the Governments of the USA, Norway, Germany, Spain, Canada, Czech Republic, and by the European Union, as well as by the State Enterprise "Building Directorate of Serbia".

There are no more minefields in the border area with Croatia. The last mines in that area were removed on 10 November 2009, which apart from safety, ecological and economic aspects contributed to further strengthening of confidence between people and improvement of relations between Serbia and Croatia.

After completing clearance of mine contaminated area in 2009, the Republic of Serbia planned to submit a Declaration of Completion of implementation of Article 5 of the Convention. However, in late 2009, it was subsequently established that in the South of the country there were groups of AP and AT mines of an unknown origin and type. These mines were emplaced by the members of the paramilitary formation during conflict situations in that area in late 2000 and early 2001.

Despite being faced with numerous problems, such as non-existence of mine emplacement records and the fact that these are not classical minefields emplaced by a regular army, but the

mines emplaced by paramilitary formations, the SMAC, with international assistance and support, succeeded to organize a survey of the area in 2010 and 2011. The assistance was provided by the Norwegian People's Aid and ITF. It was roughly established that in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo in 10 locations mine risk area totals 1.385.215 sqm. Mine suspected area totals around 2.000.000 sqm in 53 locations in Bujanovac and Preševo where the survey is to continue.

The SMAC has prepared several pilot demining projects and put them in its 2012 Work Plan. For the implementation of the first such project, the funds were donated, through ITF, by the US Government. The works on this project totaling 88.032 sqm in Preševo were completed on 6 November 2012.

For the second project totaling 75.987 sqm in Bujanovac, the funds were donated, also through ITF, by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is expected that these works finish in early December 2012.

Since the last Update on Article 5 implementation, which the Republic of Serbia submitted at the Standing Committee Meetings of the States Parties held this May in Geneva, we are in a position to report that a further progress has been achieved in 2012. It is manifested in 164.019 sqm being demined. Furthermore, by removing found AP mines, safety of population living in multinational community has been increased and they have been enabled to safely cultivate agricultural land and exploit forest, which happens to be the main source of their income.

The Republic of Serbia fulfills its obligations related to clearance of mine contaminated area. The dynamics of the implementation of our projects is affected by lack of funds, as well as by the fact that the remaining mine contaminated area is in an inaccessible terrain where demining cannot be done throughout the whole year, but only when weather conditions are favorable.

Having in mind that 2014 is Serbia's deadline to fulfill its obligations under the Article 5, we estimate that Serbia might face a situation that it may not destroy or ensure the destruction of all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction by 1 March 2014, namely by the deadline for fulfillment of its Article 5 obligations.

Specificity and complexity of the problem presents the fact that apart from mines still remaining in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, our country also encounters numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets remaining as a result of the 1999 bombing, as well as with other types of unexploded ordnance remaining from the WW2.

Problems related to demining in Serbia are numerous and without financial help of international community and donors, Serbia alone cannot solve these problems in reasonable time. Therefore, we appeal to donors to continue financial support of demining action in future. In that way they will help us to continue clearance operations in this part of Serbia.

Given the above, we are still not in a position to decidedly declare whether we will submit an Article 5 extension request. However, all facts indicate that we will have to do it for the above mentioned reasons. We have already established contacts with the ISU and the plan is to hold a meeting in Belgrade in the nearest future with the ISU expert related to ISU technical support to Serbia in preparation of its possible Article 5 extension request.

In the case that we submit an extension request, we will do it at the appropriate time, namely by the end of March 2013.

Furthermore, we will consider the possibility to make the extension request for less than maximum period of 10 years.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.