

ICRC statement on Serbia's Extension Request,
13th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 2 December 2013

The International Committee of the Red Cross would like to commend Serbia for successfully clearing most of its mined areas since 2003. We note that Serbia's remaining task is relatively small - 1.22 km² of confirmed hazardous areas and 2.08 km² of suspected hazardous areas as of March 2013.

In line with the comments of the Analysing Group, the ICRC appreciates the challenges that Serbia faces in terms of funding clearance and survey activities. As noted by the Analysing Group, clearance could occur earlier than expected if funding for demining is available. We hope that this will be the case, and encourage Serbia to update States Parties regularly on its national financial contribution, as well as its efforts to mobilise external resources and its overall budget.

In relation to the 2.08 km² of suspected hazardous areas, the ICRC supports the recommendation of the Analysing Group that Serbia provide annual updates to States Parties as surveying of this area progresses. We also agree with the recommendation that Serbia provide an updated detailed work plan by 1 March 2016, once the survey is completed and the extent of contamination is clear. In addition, we encourage Serbia to report to States Parties annually on the benchmarks set out in its work plan. This is particularly important in light of the challenges Serbia faces in trying to tackle not only the clearance of anti-personnel mines, but also of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

Pending completion of clearance operations, it is also important that Serbia conduct Risk Education activities with affected communities to ensure the safety of the population.

In sum, the ICRC supports Serbia's request for a 5-year extension, but would like to echo the observations of the Analysing Group that a more ambitious timeframe could be adopted if additional financial support is secured from national or international sources. The ICRC looks forward to future updates from Serbia and strongly hopes that it will complete its obligations under Article 5 sooner than expected.