
Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

4 October 2016
English
Original: French

Fifteenth Meeting

Santiago, 28 November-2 December 2016

Item 10 (b) of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention

Clearing mined areas: conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation

Request for extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with article 5 of the Convention

Submitted by Niger

1. Niger ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on 23 March 1999; the Convention entered into force for Niger on 1 September 1999. Under article 5 of the Convention, Niger had until 1 September 2009 to confirm whether anti-personnel mines were present in the areas indicated and, if so, to destroy all such mines detected there.
2. Since February 2007, Niger has faced renewed security threats as a result of violent acts carried out by an armed movement. In the course of these acts, mines have been laid, making access and movement difficult for the local population and development partners.
3. In 2011, following a change in the security situation after the conflict in the north of the country and the Libyan crisis, Niger carried out an assessment mission; in May 2014, it conducted non-technical and technical surveys that revealed the presence of an ID51 anti-personnel minefield in the north of the Agadez region, in the department of Bilma (Dirkou), on the military post of Madama. In view of this situation, Niger requested, and obtained, a two-year extension of the deadline for demining, until 31 December 2015.
4. The initial request for an extension was for the demining of a surface area of 2,400 square metres. However, the technical survey carried out by specialists from Niger in May 2014 revealed that 39,304 square metres have been contaminated; when demining operations in this area began, an adjacent area measuring nearly 196,253 square metres in which both anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been laid was discovered. The perimeters of both areas have been ringed with barbed wire and are under the surveillance of sentries from the military post.
5. In the interests of fulfilling its commitments under the Convention, since November 2014, at its own expense, Niger has deployed a demining team of more than 60 persons.



6. Unfortunately, aside from French medical support for evacuation in the event of mine accidents, no aid or assistance of any type has been provided by other partners of Niger during these operations.

7. Following the assessment in 2011, Niger also suspected that anti-personnel mines were present in five other areas, likewise located in the Agadez region. The non-technical surveys conducted in May 2014 have removed all doubt about the presence of anti-personnel mines in these areas. The survey team visited all the rural communities in the department of Bilma, and it was found that neither in Bilma nor in Fachi communities have mine accidents or explosive remnants of war been seen; there have only been accidents caused by anti-vehicle mines.

8. Given the amount of contamination still present, Niger will be unable to fulfil its commitments by 31 December 2016. This is why it has prepared a second proposal, for an extension of five years, in order to clear the anti-personnel mines.

9. In view of climatic complications like sandstorms, extreme heat and cold; the nature of the journey from Niamey to Madama, which can only be made under a weekly military escort; and the lack of sufficient resources on the part of the National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons (Commission Nationale pour la Collecte et le Contrôle des Armes Illicites (CNCCAI)), the demining operations have become considerably less productive. However, in spite of everything, to date over 39,304 square metres have been demined and 1,075 mines have been found. In addition, the discovery of a mined area adjacent to the first, and covering 196,523 square metres, has led the Government of Niger to consider it impossible to destroy or clear all the anti-personnel mines located in the vicinity of Madama, and to request an extension of five years. Accordingly, because of the lack of support from partners and insufficient resources, and with new priorities like the struggle against illicit weapons proliferation and terrorist groups, Niger is requesting that the deadline be extended until 31 December 2020.

10. In preparation for the completion of the remaining work, Niger adopted the following measures: development of national standards conforming to the International Mine Action Standards and of permanent operational procedures; training and refresher training of deminers; training and deployment of eight community liaison agents to raise awareness among the population in the northern area (Kawar); acquisition of additional demining equipment; and planning of a specific two-year programme for 2014-2015 to clear Madama and to confirm whether anti-personnel mines are present in the other suspect areas, as well as to demine and clear them. In addition to the deminers previously given training or refresher training and deployed to Madama, 40 more were trained in February 2015 to reinforce the teams already present in the Madama area.

11. Regarding land release following demining and clearing, Niger has drawn from the experience of other countries through cooperation activities and information exchange, but above all, from international and national regulations on mine action. The demining of the first designated area is to be finished before the land is released to the Ministry of National Defence.

12. In the wake of the first armed conflict (1991-1995) between government forces and non-State armed movements, and with the aim of safeguarding peace, Niger, following the example of other countries in the Economic Community of West African States, set up the National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons (CNCCAI) by Decree No. 94-185/PRN of 28 November 1994. CNCCAI serves as the focal point for the implementation of the regional and international arms conventions, agreements and treaties on weapons that have been signed and ratified by Niger. It is an interministerial institution whose activities are coordinated by a permanent secretariat and which, since 2014 has been organized into departments and services, including the humanitarian demining department.

13. A workplan for the demining of the Madama zone in 2016-2020 has been developed. The expected results are as follows: (i) the mined or polluted areas of the Madama military camp will be demined and other suspect areas identified; (ii) the capacities of CNCCAI will be strengthened; and (iii) its actions will be monitored and evaluated. The plan provides for the acquisition by CNCCAI in 2016, using its own resources, of probing and marking equipment for deminers and for their training and refresher training before their field deployment in 2016-2020.

14. Budgetary expenditure for the planned activities totals US\$ 3,201,875, of which US\$ 1,000,000 corresponds to a five-year national budgetary contribution through CNCCAI, while US\$ 2,201,875 is still to be mobilized. Despite its modest means, Niger has the political will to cover some 50 per cent of the cost of the programme, financially and in kind. The State's contribution through CNCCAI since the start of the demining operations in November 2014 has been as follows: provision of demining teams and their expertise; care of deminers; installation of the necessary equipment; deployment of a team to protect the deminers in view of the security problems; provision of support vehicles and logistical support, subject to available capacity.

15. The support of bilateral and multilateral partners will be invaluable to Niger in guaranteeing the implementation of article 5 of the Convention. Bearing in mind the difficulties of the area, there will also be a need for cutting-edge technological material, protective gear, mine detection equipment and vehicles.

16. CNCCAI is still seeking funding to finalize the workplan for the demining of Madama; it must be pointed out that, without support from partners, Niger can provide no assurances that Madama will be cleared of mines.

17. The risk factors that have worked against the productivity of deminers on site are that the project will be implemented in the border areas of Niger, a hostile and inaccessible region made more difficult by the lack of security resulting from terrorist threats within Niger and at the borders with certain countries. CNCCAI has taken appropriate steps to mitigate the sometimes unpredictable security problems by deploying a particularly strong team to provide security during the demining process and by seeking the cooperation of the local population. However, the main risk factor hindering the smooth conduct of these activities is lack of funding.
