

Comments on Bosnia and Herzegovina's Extension Request



**17th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
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Twenty years after joining the Mine Ban Treaty, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina still report over one thousand square kilometers [1000 km²] of suspected contaminated area. The scale of suspected contamination is massive, and antipersonnel mines impede access to natural resources and pose an obstacle to the rehabilitation and building of infrastructure. It is high time for a renewed sense of urgency on mine action, both at the political and programmatic levels. We certainly want to be supportive of BHMAC and of clearance efforts -- we want nothing less than full success for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we want communities to be safer as soon as possible. To make this happen, the authorities will have to urgently adopt a national multi-year strategy, fix discrepancies in data, improve reporting, facilitate communication between stakeholders, reinforce national ownership and ensure that ultimately someone takes responsibility for outcomes.

Among the positive points of the request:

- Progress made since 2009 is presented in a disaggregated manner, stating how much land has been released through non-technical survey, survey, and clearance.
- The extension sought is only for two years – it is an interim period that aims at gaining clarity before seeking a final extension. This is excellent practice for states that are not yet in a position to reliably assess the magnitude of the efforts required towards completion.
- The socio-economic impact of landmine contamination is explained.
- The program is fully costed and the government intends to cover 50% of the budget, which is certainly a noteworthy effort.

Among the points that will require further information, this week and in the next two years:

- Data should be presented in a manner compliant with the International Mine Action Standards. There have been improvements in the revised request with regards to explanations on areas that are suspected of contamination and areas where contamination is confirmed, although there are still discrepancies in the figures presented in various tables. In order for the international community to understand the efforts made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, reports on all upcoming activities should use terminology consistent with IMAS.
- An explanation is needed on why the project entitled “Country assessment of suspected hazardous areas” is expected to result in the cancellation of only thirty square kilometers [30km²] after the survey of over one thousand square kilometers [1000km²] of land.
- After carefully listening to the presentation by Bosnia and Herzegovina, we still don't understand how the project entitled “Country assessment of suspected hazardous areas” articulates with ongoing annual land release operations. We hope this will become clearer when annual operational plans are shared with States Parties, for instance in Article 7 reports.