

## Croatia - Committee on Article 5

Allow me to thank Croatia for its engagement with the Committee over the course of the year. We had fruitful discussions providing good insights into the challenges faced by Croatia in the implementation of its Article 5 commitments.

Croatia submitted its request for extension of its 1 March 2019 deadline on 29 March 2018 upon which the Committee reached out to expert organisations for their input. We are thankful to the ICBL for having provided feedback. On 2 occasions (4 June and 21 June) we wrote to Croatia to request additional clarification and information on the extension, which led to Croatia submitting additional clarification on 24 August 2018.

We are thankful to Croatia for having submitted its request in a timely manner and for having engaged in a cooperative dialogue with the Committee. Croatia's request is for 7 years, until 1 March 2026.

With regard to the **request**, the Committee raised the following issues in its analysis:

1. First, Croatia's plans to complete its operations by 31 December 2025. No land release or funding is projected for 2026. The Committee wrote to Croatia noting that by finalising all operations and verification by 31 December 2025 Croatia would fulfil its Article 5 obligations in line with aspirations of the States Parties in the Maputo + 15 Declaration. Croatia responded that the time indicated in the extension request is the result of thorough analysis, consultations with relevant stakeholders and is verified by the Croatian Government. Croatia further responded that all efforts and resources of the Croatian Mine action system already are and will continue to be aimed at finishing all actual field work (i.e. demining of all known mine fields) until the end of 2025.
2. Second, it is important that Croatia continues reporting on its progress in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), disaggregating by area cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey and addressed through clearance.
3. Third, the Committee engaged with Croatia on its use of the term "Hazardous Area (HA)", which Croatia indicates to imply both 'confirmed hazardous area and suspected hazardous area (CHA + SHA)'. In this regard, it is essential that Croatia consistently provides information in a disaggregated manner (i.e., areas "known" (CHA) or "suspected" (SHA) to contain mines).
4. Fourth, the Committee wrote to Croatia regarding the circumstances, which led to the discovery of new areas and if this type of discovery is foreseen in the future. Croatia responded that new areas were identified during demining operations, non-technical survey of SHA and through interaction with the local population. Croatia responded that it did not expect the identification of a significant amount of new areas in the future.
5. Fifth, the Committee requested additional information concerning the remaining hazardous areas under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. Croatia responded by providing additional information on the type of facility but indicated that since part of the installations are classified it was unable to provide the same detail of information as in areas under the responsibility of civilian authorities.
6. Finally, the request indicates that during the extension period information will have to be gathered through non-technical survey for areas for which there are no records of any

kind and that the majority (89.7%) of the remaining hazardous areas are located in forested areas for which there are no minefield records, and no methodologies developed for reducing such areas. In this regard, the Committee notes that Croatia may benefit from discussing its situation with other States Parties that have experience in clearing similar terrain and which face similar challenges. International cooperation could be beneficial and lead to improved clearance rates. Further information on the application of mine detection dogs on mountainous terrain and the results of animal detection systems in these areas would be welcome.

From the provided information the **Committee concluded** that the Convention would benefit from Croatia submitting to the States Parties updated detailed work plans every 2 years (i.e. by 30 April 2020, 30 April 2022 and 30 April 2024) for the remaining period covered by the extension. These work plans should contain an updated list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines using terminology consistent with IMAS, annual projections of which areas and what area would be dealt with during the remaining period covered by the request and by which organisation, matched to a revised detailed budget.

The plan presented by Croatia is workable, lends itself well to be monitored, and states clearly which factors could affect the pace of implementation. It is also ambitious and its success is based on significant allocations from State budgets and contingent upon stable international funding. In this regard, the Convention would benefit from Croatia reporting annually to the States Parties as follows:

- a) Progress in continuing land release relative to the commitments given in Croatia's annual work plan, disaggregated in a manner consistent with the IMAS, including identification of new mined areas, and their impact on annual targets as given in Croatia's work plan;
- b) Updates regarding the full range of practical methods used to release land, including the use of mechanical assets and animal detection systems in forested areas; as well as updates regarding the training in new methodologies and quality control;
- c) Updates regarding the review of its National Mine Action Strategy (2009-2019) and updates on the implementation of the strategy for the period of the extension request (2019-2026);
- d) Updates regarding resource mobilisation efforts; and
- e) Updates regarding the structure of Croatia's mine action programme, including institutional capacities to respond to residual contamination.

In addition to reporting as noted above, it is important that Croatia keeps States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments regarding the implementation of Article 5 during the period covered by the request and other commitments made in the request at intersessional meetings, Meeting of the States Parties and Review Conferences as well as through its Article 7 reports using the Guide for Reporting.