

## **Serbia - Committee on Article 5**

I would like to thank Serbia for its engagement with the Committee over the course of the year. Our fruitful interactions gave us a good impression of the challenges faced by Serbia in its implementation of Article 5.

On 14 March 2018, Serbia submitted its request for extension of its 1 March 2019 deadline upon which the Committee reached out to expert organisations for their inputs. We thank the ICBL for having provided feedbacks. On 4 June 2018, the Committee wrote to Serbia to request additional clarification and information on the extension and on 28 June 2018 the Committee received additional clarifications.

The Committee thanks Serbia for having submitted its request in a timely manner and for having engaged in a cooperative dialogue with the Committee. Serbia's request is for 4 years, until 1 March 2023.

With regard to the **request**, we commend Serbia for the information included in the request and for its national contribution to addressing the challenge. In our analysis we raised the following issues:

- First, considering the low density contamination in areas cleared during the previous extension period (i.e., one antipersonnel mine destroyed for every 56,940 square metres “cleared”), we underline the importance of Serbia making use of the full range of practical methods to rapidly release, with a high level of confidence, areas suspected of containing anti-personnel mines as recommended by the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties. In this context, we note the importance of Serbia continuing to report on its progress in a manner consistent with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), disaggregating by area cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey and addressed through clearance.
- Second, the Committee wrote to Serbia to request information on how the fact that over 50% of the area addressed has been cancelled over the course of the extension period has been factored into the expected outcomes and asked Serbia to include a disaggregation between expected outputs. Serbia did not respond to this question directly but highlighted that in 2017 and 2018, the Serbian Mine Action Centre has prepared technical survey projects, in a form adjusted to the context of Serbia, in response to the stated preference of international donors for technical survey above clearance.
- Third, while the plan presented is workable, the fact that Serbia indicates that it released more than 50% of its contamination through cancellation and that it is developing national mine action standards suggests that Serbia may find itself in a situation wherein it could proceed with implementation faster than that suggested by the amount of time requested. Doing so would benefit both the Convention and Serbia given the socio-economic benefits that will flow from demining.

The Committee **concludes** from the provided information that the Convention would benefit from Serbia submitting to the States Parties by 30 April 2020 and 30 April 2022 updated

detailed work plans for the remaining period covered by the extension. These work plans should contain an updated detailed list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, annual projections of which areas and what area would be dealt with each year during the remaining period covered by the request and by which organisation, matched to a revised detailed budget.

The plan presented by Serbia is workable, lends itself well to be monitored, and states clearly which factors could affect the pace of implementation. The plan is based on allocations from the State budget and contingent upon stable international funding. In this regard, the Committee notes that the Convention would benefit from Serbia reporting annually to the States Parties on the following:

- (a) Progress in land release activities relative to the commitments made in Serbia's annual work plan, disaggregated in a manner consistent with the IMAS, including the identification of new mined areas and their impact on annual targets as given in Serbia's work plan;
- (b) Progress in developing relevant land release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with the IMAS, for the full and expedient implementation of the Convention during the extension request period and their impact on annual targets as given in Serbia's work plan;
- (c) Updates regarding resource mobilisation efforts, including efforts in approaching potential donors and efforts in raising awareness of the lack of funding with state authorities, public enterprises and local authorities to fund clearance operations, and the result of these efforts.

In addition to reporting as noted above, it is important that Serbia keeps the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments regarding the implementation of Article 5 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 to Reporting.