
**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**

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Informal presentation of requests submitted under Article 5
and of the analysis of these requests**

**Analysis of the request submitted by Algeria for an extension
of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-
personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the
Convention**

**Submitted by the President of the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties
on behalf of the States Parties mandated to analyse requests for
extensions**

1. Algeria ratified the Convention on 9 October 2001. The Convention entered into force for Algeria on 1 April 2002. In its initial transparency report submitted on 1 May 2003, Algeria reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Algeria is obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 April 2012. Algeria, believing that it will be unable to do so by that date, submitted on 31 March 2011 to the President of the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties (10MSP), a request for an extension of its deadline. On 11 May 2011, the 10MSP President wrote to Algeria to request additional information. Algeria provided a response on 23 May 2011 and subsequently, on 17 August 2011, Algeria submitted to the 10MSP President a revised request for extension incorporating additional information provided in response to the President's questions. Algeria's request is for 5 years (until 1 April 2017).

2. The request indicates that information regarding landmine contamination in Algeria was drawn from a report of the first systematic demining activities which took place from 1963 to 1988 which classified land as follows: *completely demined areas*, which concerned 506.66 square kilometres of cleared land where two or three clearance campaigns had taken place and where no explosion of mines or explosive remnants of war had subsequently been reported; *areas requiring further treatment*, which concerned areas where clearance campaigns had taken place but which subsequently showed signs of contamination or where mine-related incidents have occurred; *areas still mined*, which concern areas of the minefield of difficult access where no clearance work has been carried out; and, *two historical sites* consisting of two portions of the "Challe et Morice" mine belt preserved intact and duly protected by wire fencing. The request also indicates that in 1994 and 1995, mines were laid by the Algerian army in 15 sites in the north.

3. The request indicates that, while mined area documentation was provided by the French military authorities 45 years after the end of hostilities on 20 October 2007, this documentation did not contain the information necessary for Algeria to estimate the quantity of anti-personnel mines left behind by the colonial forces after the armed conflict. The request also indicates that the accompanying maps and sketches also did not provide information identifying contaminated areas on Algerian territory other than those already known and recorded as such.

4. The request indicates that, prior to resumption of mine clearance operations on 27 November 2004, a military technical analysis was carried out and cross-checked with first-hand information from the report of the first phase (1963-1988). The request indicates that this resulted in the report of the mined areas having a total length of 1,412.26 kilometres crossing the seven provinces of Tlemcen, Nâama and Bechar in the West as well as El Tarf, Souk Ahras, Tebessa and Guelma in the East. The request further indicates that the surface area can be estimated by multiplying the minefield length by an average width of 20 metres.

5. The request indicates that during the first phase of operations, from 1963 to 1988, the military dismantled 1,482 kilometres of the 2,531 kilometres of mine belt in an area of 500.06 square kilometres culminating in the destruction of 7,819,120 anti-personnel mines. The request also indicates that in addition to the 500.06 square kilometres of land cleared during the first phase, an additional 66.9 square kilometres were cleared up to 30 June 2011 (10.45 square kilometres in the East, 17.36 square kilometres in the North West and 39 square kilometres in the South West) with work proceeding at a rate of more than 7,150 mines per month destroyed. The request indicates the following progress since the recommencing of operations:

(a) Operations on the South West border in the province of Bechar were completed on 16 February 2011 culminating in the destruction of 286,319 anti-personnel mines and 311 flare mines with the release of an area of 9.114 square kilometres. Clearance on the South West border is now 100 percent completed.

(b) Operations on the North West border are partially complete with 5 municipalities in the province of El Tarf, 9 others in the province of Tebessa and 1 in the province of Souk Ahras having been addressed with the clearance of a 4.36 kilometres and with 9.5 square kilometres of land released, culminating in the destruction of 63,177 anti-personnel mines, 1605 shells and flares. Demining units are currently engaged in suspected mined areas in 10 municipalities in the province of El Tarf, 9 in the province of Souk Ahras, 3 in the province of Guelma and 9 in the province of Tebessaa in order to ensure the clearance of a 310 kilometre suspected mine belt and release 6.2 square kilometres of land.

(c) Operations on the Eastern border, began in December 2007, have now exceeded 35 percent of initial projections.

(d) Operations on the North Western border have been completed in the community of Djenien Bourezg where a 7.9 kilometre mine belt has been cleared, removing and destroying 81,087 anti-personnel mines and releasing 4.19 square kilometres of land as well as releasing areas around a railroad line which crosses north to south through the province of Nâama Mecheria in Oued Lakhdar where 26,940 antipersonnel mines were removed and destroyed. Clearance operations on the North West border, which began on 27 November 2004, have reached 71.54 percent completion with demining units now engaged in suspected mine areas of province of Tlemcen and Nâama to work towards the clearance of 7.36 square kilometres of land.

(e) A new 8 kilometre mine belt was discovered on 13 June 2011 and was recently completed with the removal of 2,387 mines.

6. The request indicates that the 15 mined areas laid by the Algerian Army in 1994 and 1995 have all been addressed, culminating in the destruction of 15,907 mines :

(a) In the territory of the 5th Military Region, located in the north east, the site clearance operation was performed and resulted in the destruction of all 499 mines laid. The operation was conducted from 20 – 23 February 2000.

(b) In the territory of the 2nd Military Region located in the northwest of the country, the 9,172 anti-personnel mines laid in 9 sites were destroyed from June 3 to July 17, 2005.

(c) In the territory of the 1st Military Region at the centre of the country, 6,038 mines were laid in 5 sites. One such site was cleaned April 6, 2000, another on 1 August 2004, a third 27 May 2006, the 4th June 14, 2007 and 5th April 28, 2011.

7. The request indicates that the initial clearance featured the use of mechanical and manual clearance methods by the Combat Engineers. The request indicates that the use of manual clearance is preferred both because the earlier practice of using mechanical methods did not prove reliable as mines have been located in areas that had been cleared by mechanical means and because the contaminated areas are in mountainous and rocky areas.

8. The analysing group noted that Algeria could benefit from ensuring the use of the full range of technical and non-technical means to release suspected hazardous areas in keeping with the recommendations adopted by the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties. In this regard, the analysing group noted the importance of Algeria continuing to report on its progress in a manner consistent with commitments the States Parties had made through the adoption of the Cartagena Action Plan by providing information disaggregated by release through clearance, technical survey and non-technical survey.

9. The request indicates that the monitoring of all clearance operations is ensured by quality control inspection officers through visits during operations, in an impromptu manner, as well as systematically at the end of each clearance project in an area to be cleared or re-treated. The quality control inspectors have been trained in the application of International Mine Action Standards and work, according to the different cases, by prodding and/or sampling. The request indicates that the formal return of cleared land is organized with the military leaders responsible for the clearance operation and the civilian and military authority concerned, and, includes a post-clearance land release document which contains a description of the work carried out, the dates, the results obtained in figures, the title of the leader in charge of operations as well as a scale map of the operational area. The request further indicated that no incidents have been reported since the restitution of cleared areas. The analyzing group noted that Algeria may benefit from integrating an independent quality control mechanism to ensure the quality of operations carried out by its Armed Forces.

10. The request indicates that there have been significant socio-economic gains made since entry into force as a result of Article 5 implementation. The request indicates that there has been a significant reduction in mine-related accidents from 126 in 2005, 17 in 2007 and 1 in 2010. The request also indicates that there is a benefit from the intervention and involvement of the military in a local development project, particularly the clearance of a railway line Mecheria - Bechar as part of the Support Programme for Economic Recovery (PSRE).

11. The request indicates that remaining work includes suspected areas in 10 municipalities in the province of El Tarf, 9 in the province of Souk Ahras, 3 in the province of Guelma and 9 in the province of Tebessa in order to ensure the clearance of 887 kilometre long suspected mine belt and release 17.74 square kilometres of land. The request also indicates that in the west remaining work includes suspected areas in 10 municipalities

in the province of Tlemcen and 2 municipalities in the province of Naama to ensure the clearance of 191.8 kilometres long suspected mine belt and release 7.4 square kilometres of land.

12. The request indicates that the human and material resources are available for clearance through four units of Combat Engineers. The request indicated that to increase the pace of clearance, two additional units were deployed on 27 June 2010.

13. As noted, Algeria's request is for 5 years (until 1 April 2017) on the basis that the areas situated in the North East will be the most challenging in terms of the suspected mine belts to be cleared, as well as taking into account the particular difficulties encountered there due to the mountainous and densely-wooded terrain, the harsh, humid climate and the protected status of these areas which limits the approaches and methods of intervention possible in these locations. The request indicates that recent experience in the east suggests that clearance can continue at a rate of 4.9 kilometers per month by two units. Thus, if in a year these detachments are clearing 56.28 kilometers (4.69 kilometers x 12 months), then three units now deployed in the field can clear approximately 168.84 kilometers per year. Consequently, the extension period will be sufficient for the six units deployed to the East and West to complete the mission entrusted to them by the end of the extension period (April 2017).

14. The request indicates that there are certain factors that may influence the realisation of the desired extension plan. The request indicates that, in the past, the units dedicated to the implementation of Article 5 have been redeployed to respond to isolated requests to neutralise the threat of anti-personnel mines or other explosive remnants of war. The request indicates that, in addition to this, there are three minefields with specific characteristics that make it impossible to give a precise date for completion of the work to be carried out. These characteristics include fragmentation mines set into granite rocks on the slopes of the Jebel Moghrar Mountain over a distance of 8 kilometres, and, mined areas that have been covered with sand. The analysing group noted that Algeria may benefit from discussion of its situation with other States Parties that have experience in clearing similar terrain and which face similar challenges. The analysing group noted that such cooperation could be mutually beneficial, and could lead to improved clearance rates.

15. The request indicates the following as impeding circumstances: (a) the extent of contamination; (b) the late start of operations (27 November 2004) due to the updating and confirmation of data concerning the confirmed or suspected mined areas; (c) the exclusive use of the manual method; (d) the extension, as a precautionary measure, of the limits of the mine fields due to the certain displacement of mines from their initial positions; and, (e) the relative influence of climatic conditions on working conditions which, intermittently, slow down the rate of operations. The analysing group noted that the delay in proceeding more rapidly with implementation as soon as possible after entry into force hampered Algeria in fulfilling its obligations by its deadline.

16. The request indicates that operations over the extension period will be carried out by military units of the Combat Engineers. The request indicates that 3 units will continue to implement Article 5 in the East and 2 in the West where they are already deployed and will continue to operate simultaneously until April 2012. The request indicates that it is expected that the first unit to complete its work in the province of El Tarf in the East in October 2015 will be deployed in November to the province of Guelma to carry out clearance in three communities. The request indicated that the remaining 2 units in the East will deal with the province of Souk Ahras and Tebessa. The request also indicates that it is expected that the 2 units in the West will finish their work by 2014 in the province of Tlemcen and then and then complement the work on going in Naama.

17. The request provides annual projections of the number of areas and the total area to be released; in the province of Tiemecen from April 2012 to April 2014 a total of 10 mined areas will be addressed with an estimated surface of 0.85 square kilometres; in the province of Nâama from March 2012 to April 2017 a total of 2 mined area will be cleared with an estimated surface area of 6.52 square kilometres; in the province of d'El – Taref from April 2012 to October 2015 a total of 10 mined areas will be cleared with an estimated surface area of 4.22 square kilometres; in the province of Guelma from November 2015 to April 2007 a total of 3 mined areas will be cleared with an estimated surface area of 2.32 square kilometres; in the province de Souk-Ahras from April 2012 to September 2016 a total of 9 mined areas will be cleared with a total estimated area of 5 square kilometres; and, in the province of Tebessa from March 2012 to April 2017 a total of 9 areas will be cleared with a total estimated area of 6.20 square kilometres.

18. The analyzing group noted Algeria's commitment to the obligations of the Convention by removing the mines in two historic sites consisting of two sections of the "challe" mine belt and to then reconstruct this site as "open air museum" to commemorate mine victims and martyrs of the war for independence. The request indicates that these sites have entered into the collective memory of the population and have become gathering places to commemorate this significant event in Algeria's history.

19. The request indicates that in order to prevent civilian access to mined areas, Algeria carries out mine risk education efforts for people living near suspected areas in order to promote safe behavior among the population. The request also indicates that Algeria marks minefields when security allows and that at times, due to the security situation, prompt marking of the mined areas is often not possible.

20. The analysing group noted that the plan presented by Algeria is workable, comprehensive and complete. The request indicates that the implementation of the plan will be at the sole expense of the Algerian State. The analysing group noted that Algeria was demonstrating a high level of national ownership over the challenge although details of the required resources would have been helpful.

21. The analysing group noted that the provision of annual milestones of progress to be achieved, which Algeria included in its request, would greatly assist both Algeria and all States Parties in assessing progress during the extension period. In this regard, the analysing group further noted that both could benefit if Algeria provided updates relative to the annual milestones of expected progress at meetings of the Standing Committees, Meetings of the States Parties, and at the Third Review Conference.