
**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**

24 September 2012

Original: English

Twelfth Meeting

Geneva, 3-7 December 2012

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Article 5 extension requests and the extension request process

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

Executive summary

Submitted by Afghanistan

1. Mines have been used extensively since conflict erupted in 1978. Russian and the Russian-backed Afghan forces used mainly anti-personnel (AP) mines while the Mujahedeen used anti-tank (AT) mines. Extensive use of ordnance by Russian and Afghan forces created an additional significant explosive remnant of war (ERW) problem with large concentrations of both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned ammunition. After the fall of the pro-Soviet regime, extensive and indiscriminate use of AP and AT mines continued as the Taliban clashed with the coalition of anti-Taliban forces called the Northern Alliance. The US-led coalition military action following the 9/11 terrorist attacks resulted in further ERW contamination in the country.

2. The socio-economic impact of contamination was significant. The presence of mines reduced crop production, increased transportation costs, and added obstacles to repatriation and rehabilitation. Approximately 8,300 public buildings such as schools, health facilities and factories were unusable due to the presence of mines, directly affecting about 623,000 people. More than 228 square kilometres of productive agricultural land had been blocked due to the presence of mines, with the estimated loss valued at US\$ 11.5 million per year. Mines laid on and around roads led to severe restrictions to transportation, making the delivery and movement of goods more difficult and costly. There was an estimated loss of more than US\$ 26 million due to increased transportation costs and extended travel times.

3. The humanitarian impact in terms of deaths and injuries was considerable, with 21,262 recorded casualties due to mines and other ERW from 1979 until 30 June 2012, though it is most probable that the total is higher due to difficulties in accurate reporting in such large country with limited communication infrastructure. Records indicate that AP mines and other ERW have claimed the lives of 4,037 Afghans and injured 17,225, exacting the highest toll between 1997 and 2002 with 595 Afghans killed and 4,185 injured during this time period by AP mines.

4. Mine clearance operations were launched after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989. These were mainly coordinated from Pakistan, with the exception of the HALO Trust, which opened an office in Kabul in 1988. The UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA) was first established by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Islamabad, along with five Afghan non-governmental organisations. Additional partners were added over time. In 1990, a high level commission was established by the Government of Afghanistan, becoming essentially the first mine action coordination centre. This later became the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) and was integrated into the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA). DMC is now the lead government agency for mine action and is responsible for overall strategy. After the Taliban regime collapsed in 2001, the UN transferred the responsibility for the coordination of mine action to the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and UNMACA moved from Islamabad to Kabul. In 2008, UNMACA rebranded itself as the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) as a step forward to nationalization and transition of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan's (MAPA) - the collective term for all agencies involved in mine action in Afghanistan – coordination responsibility to the Government of Afghanistan.

5. The MAPA has made significant and valiant attempts since 1989 to survey the extent of contamination. Surveys include the National Survey launched in 1993, followed by general survey implemented from 1994 to 2002, and the Afghanistan Landmine Impact Survey (ALIS) which was implemented as an effort to confirm the extent of hazards nationwide shortly after Afghanistan acceded to the Convention in 2003. Hindrances to accurate understanding of contamination included lack of information on the size and locations of minefields, lack of access due to insecurity, and ongoing conflict that has continued until the present day. Mine action agencies should be commended for their hard work and consistent delivery in difficult circumstances.

6. Afghanistan considers the results of the ALIS, as of 1 January 2005, to be the most accurate baseline from which progress can be measured. The results of the ALIS indicated that a total of 3,527 suspected AP mine suspected hazardous areas (SHA) measuring a total of 445.6 square kilometres of land was impacting 1,914 communities. In addition to this, there were 978 AT mine/UXO SHAs measuring a total of 270 square kilometres and impacting 657 communities.

7. From 1 January 2005 until the end of June 2012, implementers have made significant progress, despite an additional 3,503 hazards being added to the original challenge in the period since accession. This additional contamination results from ongoing survey efforts which discovered previously unknown contamination. Nonetheless, 1,213.9 square kilometres of hazards (AP and AT minefields plus battlefields) have been removed, 775,119 AP mines, 31,317 AT mines and 489 IEDs have been destroyed, as well as 6.4 million items of UXO and 3.1 million pieces of small arms ammunition. In addition, 29,353 tons of unserviceable ammunition, 450 unknown explosive devices, 245.6 tons ammonium nitrite and 14.74 tons of potassium chloride have also been destroyed.

8. All land release activities in Afghanistan are based on the standards and principles outlined in Afghanistan Mine Action Standards (AMAS), which are based on the UN's International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). These activities include releasing land through cancellation, survey (non-technical survey and technical survey) and clearance (manual, mechanical, mine detection dogs). In addition, task handover is the final and critical step in releasing contaminated land which has been cleared for the productive and safe use. To make sure that the handover process is managed well, MACCA has dedicated one specific chapter of the AMAS to this activity.

9. As well as contributing to the fall in casualty rates from a high of 2,027 per year in 2001 to 409 in 2011, clearance has directly benefitted the socio-economic well being of

both rural and urban communities. For example, the contamination of the capital, Kabul, has been addressed to a great extent and some other major cities such as Kandahar, Herat, Khost, Jalalabad and Kunduz have also been cleared of all significantly impacting minefields. Land was cleared around Kabul International Airport, and clearance activities enabled a new power transmission line from Uzbekistan to Kabul City, which now meets half the city's electricity needs.

10. MAPA has gained a wealth of experience and has achieved notable successes. Internal and external evaluations of activities have shown that MAPA has made a significant socio-economic contribution to the people of Afghanistan. Mine action standards have been developed. The concept of quality management has been embedded into the programme, and shows a continuous improvement in the quality of mine action being delivered in Afghanistan, with the number of major non-conformity reports reducing despite an increase in the number of operational teams. The programme is well coordinated internally and externally, with solid links to government ministries, and information management has been bolstered. Clearance operations have been supplemented by efforts to exclude civilians from mined areas through clear marking of such areas and delivering mine risk education (MRE) to affected communities. Since Afghanistan acceded to the Convention in 2003, almost 13.5 million people have received MRE. MAPA is now more experienced, mature, and resilient than ever before.

11. Multiple factors have impeded compliance with the Convention within ten years of accession including the following:

(a) Under-funding - The magnitude of mines and other ERW contamination in comparison to the available mine action resources and capacities can be considered as one of the main reasons for this failure. While the international aid community has generously funded this programme for many years, the reality has always been a mismatch between the amount of funding required and the scale of the problem.

(b) Security and ongoing conflicts – Afghanistan has not yet achieved a nationwide peace and stability since the start of armed conflicts in 1979. Although demining operators have been able to continuously work amidst conflicts insecurity in many mine affected areas has slowed down, and in some areas completely, halted the progress of mine clearance.

(c) AV mines and other ERW – Due to the presence of many high priority AV mine contaminated areas, MAPA was not able to focus only on AP mine clearance. Some of the mine action resources also had to be allocated for addressing other ERW problems.

(d) Lack of records and maps – Indiscriminate use of mines and the lack of records and maps of mined areas have been a major challenge, requiring extensive efforts to identify mined areas. Due to the non-availability of key informants, survey teams had to rely on local people who generally had limited information about mine areas. As a result, locating AP mines and destroying them has not occurred as fast as hoped and often large areas of land have had to be cleared.

(e) Nuisance minefields – The majority of mined areas in Afghanistan contain sub-surface randomly laid mines. This has made the identification of mines in the mined area a challenging and time consuming activity.

(f) New minefield reporting – Despite several national-level survey efforts to identify mined areas many contaminated areas remained hidden due to the lack of information and lack of urgent requirement for land use. As a result of increased access and population movements previously unreported minefields are being reported and added into the national mine action database. Consequently the baseline for clearance has constantly increased.

(g) Potential for reduced livelihood generation – The MAPA has been a significant livelihood provider for many people for over 2 decades. Currently almost 15,000 are employed in the sector. In a country where employment opportunities for rural men and women are very poor, the determination to “finish the job” can be affected. Communities perceived that it is in their best interest to report suspected minefields if income generation is provided by clearance (jobs, provision of supplies to demining teams such as vehicle rental, fuel, foodstuffs, etc). MACCA has found that in many cases new minefields have been reported by communities which have been surveyed and checked by MACCA later and found to be false.

(h) Mine action technology - Mine action technology has evolved since 2003, but there has not been a breakthrough that has substantially increased the productivity of manual mine clearance, which is the main method used in Afghanistan. The available metal detectors are not able to distinguish between mines and a piece of metal. To find a mine a deminer has to do prodding and excavation on several false alarms received through his metal detector or a mine detection dog. As a result identification and destruction of landmines is slow.

(i) Competing priorities – After 2001 Afghanistan witnessed a considerable increase of international assistance. Several major infrastructure projects were planned and implemented. Main highways of the country and in addition to rehabilitation of the old power lines a new power line from north of the country to capital city was built. Most of these project needed demining support, hence considerable resources had to be deployed to address the landmine contamination in support of reconstruction and development rather than focusing solely on AP minefield removal.

12. Although significant progress has been made, at present, Afghanistan remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with 671,000 Afghans (3 percent of the total population) living within 500 meters of mine contaminated areas. During the last two and half years, an average of 41 civilians per month – over 50 per cent boys – died or were injured in mine and other ERW accidents. Over 80 per cent of the remaining areas of mine and ERW contamination obstruct agricultural areas, a major obstacle in a country where 70 per cent of the labour force is involved in agricultural activities. A significant proportion of contamination is located within 200 metres of important infrastructure such as irrigation systems, roads, health facilities, camps for the internally displaced, airports, power lines and bridges.

13. Contamination currently affects a significant number of Afghan communities with 1,537 communities (4.7 per cent of the total number of communities in Afghanistan) directly impacted by AP mine, AT mine or other ERW contaminated areas. Indirect impact of this contamination on other communities is considerable, affecting travel between communities and development projects that would benefit multiple communities. There are now 43 important development projects planned in Afghanistan which will require some mine action intervention, such as the railway line between Kabul and Mazar provinces, three main dam projects in Kunar, Laghman and Takhar provinces, and several road networks. The projects are vital for the country’s economic development and their success can be at risk if the threat of landmines and other ERW is not addressed.

14. For Afghanistan to comply with the Convention by its requested extended deadline of 1 March 2013, it must address 3,248 AP minefields covering 257.92 square kilometres. From a humanitarian perspective, Afghanistan cannot focus only on AP mine removal at the expense of AT mine and battlefield clearance. There are AT minefields and battlefields that are high priorities for clearance than some AP minefields. Therefore, 1,097 AT minefields covering 247.07 square kilometres and 97 other ERW contaminated areas covering 26.88 square kilometres are also included in the work plan.

15. The work plan submitted as part of this extension request sets out projects in order of priority with a cost of US\$ 618.6 million. Hazards are ranked in terms of impact on the community and are “projectised” to enable monitoring and evaluation of each of 308 projects and to help mobilise resources. The work plan takes into account productivity rates, the number of available demining assets, and security. The work plan was developed by a committee composed of representatives from MACCA, DMC and the seven major humanitarian demining agencies, ensuring collective ownership and an agreed national plan. In addition to clearance in the first year of the extension request, the programme will complete the survey of all 32,448 communities in Afghanistan. The survey, which commenced in April 2012, will enable Afghanistan to confirm areas free of the impact of mines and ERW and also to ensure all hazard is reported and recorded.

16. The work plan is fully achievable by the end of the extension period, provided that funds materialize on time and that the security situation allows for implementation in mined areas. To note, the work plan is based on a conservative estimate of clearance outputs, and of future donor contributions. Should funds in excess of the foreseen yearly amounts be secured, clearance could be accomplished within a shorter timeframe. The work plan has the following milestones:

(a) 2013: 712 hazards removed with a total of 78.09 square kilometres released; 277 communities, 17 districts and one province declared impact free; Survey of 863 impacted communities and 15,361 non-impacted communities; Survey complete; preparation of revised work plan if necessary; EOD village by village (VbV) search in 863 impacted communities and 2,295 non-impacted communities; VbV complete; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(b) 2014: 706 hazards removed with a total of 64.57 square kilometres released; 242 communities, 24 districts and one province declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(c) 2015: 654 hazards removed with a total of 55.40 square kilometres released; 185 communities, 28 districts and two provinces declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(d) 2016: 528 hazards removed with a total of 40.18 square kilometres released; 116 communities, 25 districts and five provinces declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(e) 2017: 407 hazards removed with a total of 53.62 square kilometres released; 114 communities, 17 districts and four provinces declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(f) 2018: 376 hazards removed with a total of 60.34 square kilometres released; 165 communities, 19 districts and five province declared impact free from known hazards; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(g) 2019: 273 hazards removed with a total of 48.17 square kilometres released; 124 communities, ten districts and one province and one region (Northern) declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(h) 2020: 331 hazards removed with a total of 40.36 square kilometres released; 130 communities, 18 districts, one province and one region (Eastern) declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.

(i) 2021: 373 hazards removed with a total of 34.68 square kilometres released; 172 communities, 56 districts, nine provinces and two regions (Northeast and Southeastern)

declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance

(j) 2022: 91 hazards removed with a total of 38.42 square kilometres released; 12 communities, six districts, four provinces and three regions (Central, Southern and Western) declared impact free; EOD teams will work on spot UXO clearance, support DTs and small hazard clearance.
