

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 Croatia

1. With the beginning of the Homeland War in 1991, the Republic of Croatia started facing the mine problem as one of the most difficult consequences of war operations conducted on its territory. Mine contamination caused and continues to cause humanitarian, economic, developmental, ecological, and social disturbances.
2. During the Homeland War (1991-1995), 1,280 people were involved in 1,016 mine incidents resulting in 270 fatalities. In 1995, the largest number of casualties - 332 persons - was recorded. High numbers of casualties were also recorded in the years immediately prior to entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (hereinafter: the Convention), with another 337 casualties recorded between 1996 and 1998. Some agricultural areas, forest complexes and protected areas remain inaccessible today due to the presence or suspicion of presence of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).
3. The Republic of Croatia confirmed its resoluteness in solving the mine problem by passing the Law on Humanitarian Demining in 1996, establishing the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) in 1998, establishing the Government Office for Mine Action (GOMA) in 2012, passing the new and comprehensive Law on Mine Action in 2015, thus fulfilling the commitments undertaken by joining the Convention.
4. The Republic of Croatia has secured permanent and stable sources of financing in the State Budget and through European Union (EU) pre-accession, structural and cohesion (ESI) funds. Croatia also extensively used funds from public companies as well as the three World Bank loans and received substantial support from donors.
5. Croatia ratified the Convention on 28th May 1998 and submitted its initial transparency report on 3rd September 1999, providing information on areas that contain or are suspected to contain anti-personnel mines. Croatia had a deadline until 1st March 2009 for destroying or ensuring the destruction of all anti-personnel mines emplaced within these areas. Croatia submitted the First request for the extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, for period March 2009 - March 2019. In 2002, Croatia destroyed the last remaining stockpiles of antipersonnel mines except certain amount retained for testing and training purposes.
6. Since 2004, Croatia has precisely defined hazardous area (HA)¹, considerably reduced hazardous areas and reported a reduction of mine accidents and mine incidents which resulted in a reduction of a number of mine victims.
7. Over the past period, the Republic of Croatia has achieved the following results:

¹ Hazardous area (HA) implies confirmed hazardous area and suspected hazardous area (CHA + SHA)

- Originally, hazardous area extended along the territory of 14 out of 21 Croatian counties. On 1 January 2018, it was reduced to 8 counties.
- After the Convention's entry into force, the total hazardous area was over 5,980 km². Through the application of improved survey methods this was reduced to 1,147 km² in 2005. In the period since the First extension request (1st January 2009) HA covered the territory of 954.5km². On 1st January 2018 the HA totals 411.5 km².
- Between 1998 and 2018, over 566.4km² were demined and over 857.5km² were released through technical survey and other land release methods.
- Demining operations carried out under the auspices of civilian authorities have resulted in 84,156 mines (46,385 anti-personnel mines and 37,771 anti-tank mines) and 250,060 pieces of ERW found and destroyed. At the same time, the Croatian Army destroyed 4,466 mines (anti-personnel and anti-tank mines) and 160,372 pieces of ERW on the area around military facilities. In total, Croatia has destroyed 50,851 anti-personnel mines, 40,261 anti-tank mines and 410,432 pieces of ERW.
- In 2017, we recorded no mine accidents or mine incidents, and for the first time after Croatia was faced with mine and ERW contamination, there were no mine victims in a single year, (the last mine victim under the age of 18 was reported in 2004 and the latest civilian casualty was reported in 2014).
- In the course of time, Croatia has developed sophisticated methods and standards for humanitarian demining, technical survey and non-technical survey and quality control. These methods and standards are based on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), modified in accordance with the specific conditions in Croatia and as such have been codified through the national legislative framework for humanitarian demining. In addition, Croatia has established its own method for cancelling the area from HA providing high level of assurance that the former HA should no longer be considered dangerous.
- Croatia has marked HA with almost 13,600 mine warning signs. In addition, it is estimated that approximately 1,000,000 persons have undergone some form of mine risk education since the Convention's entry into force. Mine risk education (MRE) activities continue to be conducted through public and targeted lectures and presentations, exhibitions, TV videos and radio jingles, theatre plays, art workshops, as well as one-time special activities such as selling demining coupons, opening of children's playgrounds near hazardous areas, collecting waste paper, distribution of educational notebooks to all first-grade pupils of elementary schools and other projects at the state and local level.
- Since the Convention had entered into force, over €727.3 million has been invested in humanitarian demining activities. Overall, Croatia has obtained more than €153.7 million from international donors and EU funds. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that Croatia itself has provided majority of funding for the purpose of Article 5 implementation, with over €417 million having been obtained from Croatia's State Budget. Croatia has been ahead in using funds for demining from the World Bank, state companies and the EU funds.
- As noted, the estimated HA remains 411.5 km². This includes areas that have been identified through non-technical survey operations and areas in and around military facilities, reported as HA by the Croatian Army.

8. The circumstances that continue to impede Croatia from complying with the Article 5 obligations twenty years after the Convention's entry into force are as follows:

- Remaining challenge: In 1996, the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC) estimated that there were over 13,000 km² of potentially dangerous area in Croatia. By 1 January, 2018, Croatia reduced the hazardous area to 411.5 km² through demining and the application of improved survey methods².
- Humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications: Entry into force of the Convention occurred 2.5 years after the end of the Homeland War. War damage was enormous, with cities and villages levelled communication and utility infrastructure destroyed and industrial plants unusable. Humanitarian activities were only part of the broader set of reconstruction efforts that had to be undertaken. The Homeland War resulted in minefields that were not marked and with few useful records of their placement retained. The borders of minefields were not marked and data from minefield records were inaccurate and incomplete.
- The number of mines was unknown. In addition, mines have been moved further away from their initial place due to weather conditions and soil erosion.
- Environmental challenges: Minefields are uneven and cluttered with barriers due to the nature of the terrain (mountains, rocky terrains, river banks used as demarcation lines during the war operations). Furthermore, heavy vegetation has been a major circumstance impeding more rapid progress. Many minefields are placed in environments that have rapid foliage growth rates.

9. In terms of humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications, the effort to implement the Convention to date and to more generally address the problems associated with explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Croatia has resulted in decrease of the number of new victims, facilitated the return of displaced persons, and freed land for socio-economic gains. However, humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications remain and it is expected that these will be addressed during the extension period:

- HA continue to be found in 59 municipalities in 8 out of 21 Croatian counties. A total of 488,984 inhabitants – 11.3% of the population of Croatia – continue to live in the vicinity of HA.
- Mined agricultural areas and forest areas represent a significant problem for the economy. According to the Croatian Forests Ltd. calculation, total loss because of mined agricultural areas (in fact, mostly forested areas) and the value of forest wealth that cannot be used (because of mines) is approximately €13.5 million. Additional losses come out of the inability to maintain and renew the existing forests.
- While Croatia has placed a priority on creating safe conditions for tourism, some subsectors continue to be affected, particularly hunting tourism given the nature of the remaining HA.
- HA account for nearly 45.5 square kilometres of national parks or nature reserves.

² Improved survey methods (non-technical and technical survey). The CROMAC has applied the aerial survey as a qualitative upgrade to the non-technical survey.

10. Croatia is requesting a 7 year extension of its deadline for completing the destruction of all antipersonnel mines in mined areas (i.e. until 1st March 2026) on the basis that this is a realistic but not unambitious amount of time given the extent of the remaining problem and the human, material and financial resources available or expected, and the demining and survey capacities currently available. In the first six years, all known minefields would be cleared, and in the remaining one year period, entire hazardous area would be released, (as shown in Table's no. 14, 15, 16 and 17).
11. Croatia has a credible plan for fulfilling its obligations by 1st March 2026 with some of the main features as follows:
 - Croatia has prioritised the remaining HA according to: those which affect safety, those which pose barriers to the socio-economic development and those which affect the ecology in other ways. While priorities at the operative level will be elaborated in the annual demining plans, Croatia's goals are to clear all areas intended for agriculture until the end of 2018 and to demine all known minefields until 2024.
 - Croatia's future projections foresee that the 253.4 square kilometres of confirmed hazardous area (CHA) will be released by demining and 133.9 square kilometres of suspected hazardous area (SHA) will be released through non-technical and technical survey. Croatia has developed annual timelines for the land release according to each method. These annual milestones will provide benchmarks for Croatia to report to the States Parties about the progress made in implementing the commitments under the Article 5 during the extension period.
 - In the period of the realisation of the Article 5 implementation efforts during the extension period, Croatia will continue to comply with its obligations under the Article 5, paragraph 2, by maintaining marking of the entire HA, replacing existing mine danger markings or placing additional markings as required and providing the entire population living in HA with MRE activities.
12. It is estimated that the fulfilment of the Article 5 obligations in the Republic of Croatia will cost a total of €459 million. Annual projections for funding needs are based on sound formulas regarding extensive experience Croatia has had with the actual costs of land release through the full range of methods (e.g., demining, technical survey and non-technical survey). It is expected that the Croatian State Budget will continue to finance the majority of demining activities, as well as the European Union (EU) funds which will be complemented by funds provided by other government bodies, state companies, and on the micro level, from domestic and foreign donors.