

**Analysis of the request submitted by Serbia 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 Committee on Article 5 Implementation  
(Chile, Colombia, the Netherlands, Switzerland)**

**20 September 2018**

1. Serbia acceded to the Convention on 18 September 2003, and the Convention entered into force for Serbia on 1 March 2004. In its initial transparency report submitted on 1 September 2004 Serbia reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Serbia was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 March 2014. Serbia, believing that it would be unable to do so by that date, submitted a request to the 2013 Thirteenth Meeting of the States Parties (13MSP) for a 5 year extension of its deadline, until 1 March 2019. The 13MSP agreed unanimously to grant the request.
2. In granting Serbia's request in 2013, the 13MSP noted that the plan presented by Serbia was workable but lacked ambition. And that, in this context, Serbia could find itself in a situation wherein it could proceed with implementation faster than that suggested by the amount of time requested and that doing so could benefit both the Convention and Serbia itself given the indication by Serbia of the socio-economic benefits that will flow from demining. In this context, the Meeting noted that all survey activities were scheduled to be complete by the end of 2015, which should result in Serbia having a more accurate understanding of its remaining implementation challenge.
3. On 14 March 2018, Serbia submitted to the Chair of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation a request for extension of its 1 March 2019 deadline. On 4 June 2018, the Committee wrote to Serbia to request additional clarification and information on the extension. On 28 June 2018, Serbia submitted to the Committee additional clarification in response to the Committee's questions. Serbia's request is for 4 years, until 1 March 2023.
4. The request indicates that at the start of Serbia's extension period, 1 March 2009, Serbia had a remaining challenge of 3,301,196 square metres, including 1,221,196 square metres of confirmed hazardous area and 2,080,000 square metres of suspected hazardous area. The request indicates that during the period of the first extension request Serbia also identified an additional 1,029,760 square metres of new suspect hazardous area.
5. The request indicates that during the extension period Serbia released a total of 1,976,416 square metres, including 1'016'085 square metres cancelled and 960'331 square metres cleared in 2014 and 2015 destroying in the process 17 anti-personnel mines and 6 items of exploded ordnance. The request indicates that Serbia did not address any land in 2013 and 2016 due to lack of funding. The Committee noted the low density of mines contained within areas cleared (i.e., one antipersonnel mine destroyed for every 56,940 square metres "cleared"), highlighted the importance of Serbia to make use of the full range of practical methods to rapidly release, with a high level of confidence, areas suspected of containing antipersonnel mines as recommended by the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties. In this context, the Committee noted the importance of Serbia continuing to report on its progress in a manner consistent with International Mine Action Standards, disaggregating by area cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey and addressed through clearance.

6. The Committee wrote to Serbia to request information on how the experience over the course of the extension period of having cancelled more than 50% of the area addressed 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.
7. The Committee wrote to Serbia requesting further information on the circumstances that led to the discovery of newly identified areas in the previous request and if the discovery of new contaminated area is anticipated in the future. Serbia responded by indicating that the remaining areas contaminated by mined do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations. Serbia also responded by indicating that as Serbia does not have resources or capacities to conduct continual survey of its overall state territory information is obtained from sources such as local population, hunters, foresters, representatives of civil protection and police, amongst others and that the Serbian Mine Action Centre, upon receiving the information of a potential suspected hazardous areas, undertakes all necessary steps to verify this information in the terrain, and based on all available methods to confirm or refute the presence of a suspected hazardous area.
8. The request indicates the following, which, in Serbia's view, acted as impeding circumstances during Serbia's first extension period: (a) lack of funds and shifting donor priorities to address cluster munition contamination; (b) unregistered mine contamination; (c) climatic conditions, preventing access to mine fields for certain periods of the year; (d) mountainous and forested terrain not being suitable for mechanical assets or use of animal detection systems; (e) the complex nature of contamination means Serbia's effort to implement Article 5 is only part of the totality of efforts required to address explosive hazards in Serbia.
9. The request indicates that 12 suspect hazardous areas measuring 2,354,540 square metres in 6 villages (Ravno Bučje, Končulj, Dobrosin, Đorđevac, Lučane, and Turlja) in the municipality of Bujanovac remain to be addressed.
10. The request indicates that anti-personnel mines continue to have humanitarian and socio-economic impacts on the municipality of Bujanovac. The municipality is the most underdeveloped municipality in Serbia. Mined areas continue to affect the safety of people, hinder the safe exploitation of woods, the development of cattle breeding and mushroom picking, the main source of income of the local population. In addition, road communications are blocked, the environment affected, and as a result fire risks increased. The Committee noted that completion of Article 5 implementation during the requested extension period had the potential of making a significant contribution to improving human safety and socio-economic conditions in the affected municipality.
11. Serbia's request is for 4 years (until 1 March 2023). The request indicates that this timescale takes into consideration the uncertainty concerning the availability of financial resources and the fact that anti-personnel mines are only part of Serbia's contamination. The request indicates that there has been a reduction in international funding for demining/clearance organizations in the South East European Countries, including Serbia. The request indicates that complete clearance could be achieved well before 2023 should funding for demining operations be provided from international donations.

12. The request indicates the following milestones: 649,000 square metres to be addressed in 2018; 462,400 square metres to be addressed in 2019; 467,880 square metres to be addressed in 2020, 269,240 square metres to be addressed in 2021; 291,400 square metres to be addressed in 2022, and; 214,620 square metres to be addressed in 2023.
13. The request further indicates that at the time of submission one technical survey project is ongoing covering 113,600 square metres in Ravno Bučje. An additional project in two areas of Đorđevac, totalling 535,300 square metres, will follow the securing of international funds. The Committee wrote to Serbia to request information on progress in implementation as well as how, the implementation of these projects, affects the timeline for completion. Serbia indicated that the project totalling 113,600 square metres was completed in May 2018, with 5 anti-personnel mines and 2 items of unexploded ordnance destroyed. Serbia also indicated that concerning the demining project in the two additional areas in the Đorđevac, national funds area available and will be matched with US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement donation through ITF Enhancing Human Security. The ITF will conduct tender procedures for the section of a contract with field operations commencing and concluding in 2018.
14. The Committee wrote to Serbia requesting further information regarding an estimated drop in annual outputs and budget following 2020, by 50%. Serbia responded that the work plan is an estimated projection based on current trends in funding, including increased contributions from the State Budget. The Committee noted that States Parties would benefit from regular updates on Serbia's remaining challenge and financial resources available.
15. The request indicates that the following methods will be employed to release areas known or suspected to contain mines: cancellation through survey, manual demining, mechanical demining and use of animal detection systems. The Committee wrote to Serbia requesting additional details concerning the application of survey and clearance methodologies to the remaining challenge as well as information on relevant national mine action standards. Serbia responded by providing significant detail on its preference for manual demining including the nature of unregistered mine fields not being laid in set patterns, and the mountainous terrain limiting the use of mechanical and animal assets. Serbia also responded that the development of national mine action standards are still in progress.
16. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia ensuring, in a manner consistent with Action #9 of the Maputo Action Plan that the most relevant land release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with IMAS, are in place and applied for the full and expedient implementation of the Convention. The Committee noted the commitment of Serbia to adopt national mine action standards. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia keeping the States Parties apprised of steps to fulfil these commitments.
17. The Committee further noted that, while the plan presented is workable, the fact that Serbia indicates that it released more than 50% of its contamination during the extension period 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. The Committee added that doing so could benefit both the Convention and Serbia itself given the indication by Serbia of the socio-economic benefits that will flow from demining.
18. The request indicates that activities over the course of the extension period will cost a total of €2,500,000. The request indicates that the Government of Serbia will allocate a total €900,000 in support of its mine action program during the period of the extension request, including €200,000 in 2018. The request also indicates that Serbia will require €1,600,000 from international

donations through the International Trust Fund (ITF) or through other sources of funding. The request indicates that at the time of writing, Serbia does not have confirmation on any contribution for implementation from donors for the extension request period. The Committee wrote to Serbia to request information on a resource mobilization strategy to complete implementation as soon as possible. Serbia responded by indicating that it has undertaken concrete steps including bilateral meetings with several states, resulting in donations from the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Serbia further indicated that it participated in the individualized approach meeting organized in partnership with the Convention's Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance. Serbia further indicated that it continues to liaise with State authorities, public enterprises and local authorities to fund clearance.

19. The Committee noted that the request includes other relevant information that may be of use to the States Parties in assessing and considering the request, including further detail on national demining structure, photos on handover and post-clearance activities, photos and description of the characteristics of Serbia's remaining mine fields, risks and assumptions on the work plan, together with annexed maps relating to remaining areas to be addressed.
20. The Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Serbia submitting to the Committee by 30 April 2020 and 30 April 2022 updated detailed work plans for the remaining period covered by the extension. The Committee noted that these work plans should contain an updated list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, 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.
21. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the information provided in the request and subsequently in responses to the Committee's questions is comprehensive, complete and clear. The Committee further noted that 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 Committee also noted that the plan is based on allocations from State budgets and contingent upon stable international funding. In this regard, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Serbia reporting annually to the States Parties on the following:
  - (a) Progress of land release activities relative to the commitments given in Serbia's annual work plan, disaggregated in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards, including the identification of new mined areas and their impact on annual targets as given in Serbia's work plan;
  - (b) Progress of developing relevant land release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with 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.
22. In addition, the Committee noted the importance of Serbia reporting as noted above, of keeping 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 for Reporting.