

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 Serbia

1. The former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, on 18 September 2003. The Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004. The continuity to the Convention in relation to the Republic of Serbia was established in accordance with Article 60 of the Charter of the State Union. Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention. In accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, of the Convention, Serbia had an obligation to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in minefield areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible, but not later than ten years after the entry into force of the Convention, 1 March 2014.
2. At the 13th Meeting of the States Parties, held 2-6 December 2013, Geneva, Swiss Confederation, the Republic of Serbia was granted a 5 year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, **1 March 2019**.
3. In its initial 10 year period for the fulfilment of the Article 5 obligations, 2004-2014, the problem related to contamination by landmines and the progress of Serbia in response to its Article 5 challenge is documented in detail in its first extension request.
4. Since the 13th Meeting in December 2013, when the Republic of Serbia was granted a 5 year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, mine contamination totalled 3,301,196 square metres in the Municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo, including 8 CHA measuring 1,221,196 square metres envisaged to be subject to mine clearance operations, and 9 SHA measuring 2,080,000 square metres envisaged to be subject to intensive survey in order to confirm or reject suspicion of the existence of group of mines. The area proven not to contain mines was to be cancelled from the category of suspected area in accordance with the IMAS regulation.
5. Since the previous request, clearance of the area of 270,616 square metres was completed in 2014 in the Municipality of Preševo. The funds have been donated, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, and by the US State Department. After conducting demining in the Preševo Municipality, during which only several pieces of UXO were discovered, as well as after a re-survey of cleared and surrounding suspected area, SMAC excluded the surrounding mine suspected area totalling 251,000 square metres from the category of mine suspected. **Thus, in the Municipality of Preševo, according to available data, Serbia can declare completion of the municipality.**
6. In 2015, one project developed by the SMAC, “An integrated approach to the mine risk land release in the territory of the Municipality of Bujanovac” was completed. The project area totalled 1,179,000 square metres, of which 413,915 square metres was subject to manual clearance in combination with detection by mine detection dogs, while the larger part of the area was land released as the area without confirmed mine risk. The funds have been provided by the Serbian Government, matched, through ITF, by the US State Department donation.

7. In 2017, one technical survey project totalling 275,800 square metres in the Bujanovac Municipality was completed. The funds have been provided by the Serbian Government, matched, through ITF, by the US State Department donation.

Table showing progress against milestones 2013-2019, and newly surveyed areas.

Year	Projected milestones		Cleared area (m ²)	Cancelled area (m ²)	Total area released (m ²)	No of APM destroyed	No. of other ED destroyed	Size of newly identified/ SHA
	Survey	Clearance						
2013	832,000	489,276						
2014	606,000	572,116	270,616	251,000	521,616		4	
2015	642,000	414,668	413,915	765,085	1,179,000	14	1	335,500
2016		256,185						694,260
2017		247,000	275,800		275,800	3	1	
Total			960,331	1,016,085	1,976,416	17	6	1,029,760

9. There are a number of circumstances that have impeded Serbia from complying with its 5 year period of first extension request. Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

- **Lack of funds:** Funding from donors for mine action activities have severely diminished through the years, with donors preference to provide funds for cluster munitions clearance;
- **Unregistered mine contaminated areas (groups of mines):** The remaining areas contaminated by mines did not have registries and had not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravated survey and clearance efforts;
- **Climactic conditions:** Contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays. Consequently, most of the suspected areas are not appropriate for the use of mine detection dogs or machinery;
- **Contamination other than mines:** Specificity and complexity of the problem presents the fact that apart from mines still remaining in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO. All these unexploded ordnance are either remaining as a result of the 1999 bombing, or are caused by an explosion and fire in a military depot, or are remaining from previous wars.

10. The remaining mine contamination presents a severe socioeconomic impact on the municipality of Bujanovac. This municipality is the most underdeveloped municipality in Serbia. Mine contaminated areas affect safety of people. Presence of mines hinders safe exploitation of woods, development of cattle breeding and mushroom picking, which happen to be the main source of income of locals and in that way mines additionally impoverish them. In addition, road communications are blocked, environment affected, and fire risks increased.

11. As of March 2018, in the Republic of Serbia there are 12 areas suspected to contain groups of anti-personnel mines **totalling 2,354,540 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac.**

12. The Republic of Serbia's achievements regarding the fulfillment of its obligation under Article 5 have been significant so far. Our aim is to fulfill the remaining obligations within the short timescale. At the same time, we are facing a number of difficulties, and the most important is the lack of adequate financial resources. The unpredictability of secure financial resourcing presents the main obstacle. Furthermore, simultaneously with mine clearance, we have to deal

with the clearance of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other UXO, since they also block significant resources of Serbia and its development and infrastructural projects.

13. Having in mind all the aspects of this issue, especially inadequate financial recourses, the remaining area to be cleared and its characteristics, the Republic of Serbia is requesting extension of the deadline for fulfilling its mine clearance obligations under the Convention.
14. In this context, the Republic of Serbia is requesting extension of the deadline under Article 5 for a period of 4 years. We believe that a 4 year period is a realistic period in which Serbia could fulfill its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention until 1 March 2023.
15. Serbia's remaining challenge consists of 12 SHA measuring 2,354,540 square metres in six village of the Municipality of Bujanovac will be released as follows:

2018: 649,000 square metres: Ravno Bučje and Djordjevac, villages.

2019: 462,400 square metres: Končulj, Lučane and Turija, villages.

2020: 467,880 square metres: Končulj, villages.

2021: 269,240 square metres: Končulj and Dobrosin, villages.

2022: 291,400 square metres: Končulj, villages.

2023: 214,620 square metres: Končulj and Ravno Bučje, villages.

16. Clearance operations will follow upon securing of funding from donors or other sources of funding. Priority will be to demine those areas which directly affect the local population. However, sometimes donors themselves, depending on availability and amount of their funds, influence the choice of the areas which will be demined first. Financial Planning for demining the Municipality of Bujanovac for the period of the extension request, (2018-2023)¹, is estimated to be **€2,354,540**, including funding from Serbia's national budget, **€900,000** and international donations/funding matched through ITF or other sources of funding, **€1,600,000**.

2018: National Budget €200,000, International funding €400,000

2019: National Budget €200,000, International funding €300,000

2020: National Budget €200,000, International funding €300,000

2021: National Budget €100,000, International funding €200,000

2022: National Budget €100,000, International funding €200,000

2023: National Budget €100,000, International funding €200,000

17. Despite the difficult economic situation in the country and modest funds from the National Budget, we will endeavor to secure funding of demining either by submitting projects to ITF applying for their funding, or lobbying with other foreign donors to provide funds for implementation of projects. The funds from the Serbian State Budget will be provided to support the on-going work of the SMAC – salaries of the staff, running costs, (electricity, water, heating), office and consumption material costs, fuel costs, maintenance of vehicles, costs of the SMAC staff insurance – as well as survey activities, development of adequate project tasks for demining/clearance of locations confirmed to be contaminated by mines, cluster munitions and other UXO, follow-up of the implementation of project tasks and conduct of demining quality assurance and quality control.

¹ Please note that at the time of writing this draft, we do not have confirmation by potential donors of the funds available for Serbia in the period to follow.

18. However, in 2015, the funds €100,000 for demining operations have been allocated from the Serbian State Budget for the first time. Also, the funds have been allocated in 2016. This trend has been continued on an annual basis and in **2018 the Serbian Government allocated the double amount of funds for demining operations**, and we expect the Serbian Government to continue to allocate the funds for demining operations throughout the requested extension period. According to some rough estimations, in addition to funds from national budget **€900,000**, we estimate that we would need around **€1,600,000** secured by international donors.
19. The dynamics of implementation of our demining projects is affected by provision of funds, that is, if the funds for implementation of our projects are not provided, our plan will be directly affected and hard to achieve. On the other hand, if more funds are provided, the work plan could be implemented in a shorter period.