

Ninth Meeting

Geneva, 24 – 28 November 2008

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of requests
submitted under Article 5**

**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 Ecuador*

1. The undeclared war due to the border dispute between Ecuador and Peru which took place in 1995 left behind a number of landmines causing severe socioeconomic impacts on communities residing along the border. A total of approximately 66,575 people living in 43 communities in Ecuador have been impacted by these mines. Traditional activities of these communities including hunting activities, fishing, wood cultivation, and other agricultural activities, have been affected. To date, 19 civilians have fallen victim to anti-personnel mines. Additionally, development sectors including tourism, agriculture, mining, cattle ranching, construction, among others, have also been affected.
2. As a result of this, Ecuador subscribed to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on 4 December 1997, ratifying on 29 April 1999, and entering into force on 1 October 1999. The Ecuadorian delegation had an active role in the negotiations of this international instrument, in virtue of its external political position which prioritizes social development, the protection of human rights, and humanitarian assistance.
3. The Government of Ecuador, through its Executive Decree No. 1297, of 22 September 1999, created the National Centre for Humanitarian Demining of Ecuador (CENDESMI), national authority on this topic, which is presided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is integrated by the Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Public Health, the Ecuadorian Agency of International Cooperation, and the General Demining Command (CGD), the operational unit of CENDESMI. In January of 2000, CENDESMI approved the National Demining Plan which incorporates mine risk education, anti-personnel mine victim assistance, stockpile destruction, and humanitarian demining.

* Submitted after due date and as soon as received by the Secretariat.

4. On 19 March 2001, in order to increase the momentum of demining operations, Ecuador signed a framework agreement on cooperation with the Comprehensive Anti-personnel Mine Action Program of the Organization of American States (AICMA/OAS). Additionally, Ecuador and Peru carry out coordinated and combined humanitarian demining on their common border which has been recognized as a valuable confidence and security building measure, increasing transparency and contributing to the security of the region.

5. Following the signing of the Brasilia Peace Accord in 28 October 1998, which put an end to the territorial dispute between Ecuador and Peru, Ecuador began its humanitarian demining process. According to military registries, information exchange between the demining units from both countries as a measure of confidence and transparency, as well as Impact Studies carried out throughout the country from 2002 – 2006, a total of 128 mined areas totalling 621,034.50 square meters was identified. These areas were estimated to contain a total of 10,910 mines of which 10,843 are anti-personnel mines and 67 are anti-tank mines.

6. The affected areas on the Ecuadorian side of the border are located in the Provinces of Morona Santiago, Zamora Chinchipe, Pastaza, Loja, and El Oro, as well as an area known as the Squared Kilometre of Tiwintza. Currently, Impact Studies are still being carried out in the Province of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe.

7. Over the years Ecuador has been carrying out a number of efforts to release its mine affected land. To date operations have culminated in the clearance of 53 mined areas totalling 118,707.39 square meters. During these operations a total of 4,621 anti-personnel mines, 65 antitank mines, and 8 UXO were destroyed.

8. In order to release land, the CENDEMSI employs manual demining through its personnel of the CGD. The CGD is the executing organism of the CENDESMI, it is an entity of the Army Corps of Engineers and is composed of two Regional Commands which are activated depending on the area of work: Regional Command Tarqui (Province of El Oro and Loja) and Regional Command Amazons (Province of Morona Santiago). Likewise, the CGD is in charge of directing humanitarian demining operations and has under its responsibility the management of the National Demining School, established in 2000, and the National Supervisor component, and has under its command 60 trained deminers.

9. The procedure employed is in conformity with those established in the Ecuadorian Manual on Technical Study Procedures. For an area to be considered as not dangerous due to the presence of mines it is cleared in its totality, which is 100% of the identified mined area, destroying in situ the detected mines and UXO. Following this the land is submitted to a rigorous process of quality control. Finally, after the clearance phase is completed and internal quality assurance is conducted there is a final stage in which cleared land is turned over by the CGD to CENDESMI which certifies and turns over cleared land to the population for its reintegration into the productive economic life of the country.

10. Furthermore, the CGD has included in its structure a National Supervision Component with the task of verifying the manual demining work being carried out by deminers. This organism ensured that operations are always carried out taking into account national and

international humanitarian demining norms. Additionally, and thanks to the agreement signed with the OAS, since June 2003, Military Officers from Brazil, Chile, Honduras and Nicaragua as part of the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in South America (MARMINAS) are stationed in Ecuador in order to certify that humanitarian demining operations that are carried out in the country, are carried out utilizing appropriate protection, detection and destruction equipment; that detection and verification methodologies employed are dependable, and that accurate security standards and procedures are utilized.

11. In order to prevent future anti-personnel mine accidents CENDESMI, with AICMA/OAS support, has as an objective not only to reduce the risk of injury or death, through the promotion of safe behaviour, but also seeks to offer solutions to behaviours observed in some affected community which places inhabitants at risk. These campaigns are carried out by the AICMA/OAS, in coordination with CENDESMI, the Ecuadorian Red Cross and the CGD. More than 37,000 people, including children, school teachers and local authorities in the Provinces of El Oro, Loja and Morona Santiago, have benefited from these campaigns. These campaigns are carried out through a variety of methods including conferences, training workshops, and dissemination of informative mine risk education material in the local language, such as backpacks, notebooks, pencils, pens and rulers.

12. From 1999 to 2007 a total of \$US 8,078,596.36 has been invested in demining operations in Ecuador. The government of Ecuador has contributed \$US 4,500,000.00 of this total through a \$US 500, 000.00 annual contribution to operations. Ecuador makes yearly requests, through AICMA-OAS, for international cooperation for the process of humanitarian demining. Parallel to this, the Department of Foreign Affairs carries out contacts at the diplomatic level, in order to acquire additional resources and to incorporate new donor countries. An example of this is the donor meeting that is carried out each year between Ecuador and Peru, in which national demining authorities of each country gather with the heads of diplomatic missions of donor countries. The purpose of these meetings is to bring to light the registered progress on humanitarian demining that is carried out by both countries in the common terrestrial border, as well as also, to call on the community of donor countries to continue offering the financial support required to assure the continuity of the humanitarian demining process.

13. In this sense and as a consequence of this action, the important contributions of the Governments U.S., Japan, Italy, Norway, the European Union, but fundamentally Canada, which has been a strategic and valuable donor since the start of the demining process in our country, should be highlighted.

14. Apart from the achievements to date there are still 75 mined areas in an area totalling 498, 632.89 square meters in the Provinces of El Oro, Loja, Zamora Chinchipe, Morona Santiago and Pastaza. It is estimated that 5, 923 anti-personnel mines and 30 anti-tank mines are pending clearance in these areas.

15. Various circumstances have presented themselves which have impeded Ecuador from achieving its mine action goals within the 10 year period allotted by the Convention. Some of the most important circumstances are highlighted below:

- (a) **Meteorological Conditions:** It is important to point out that the climate of the provinces affected by the presence of anti-personnel mines is hot and humid, its temperature oscillates between 24 and 38°C and is characterized by the presence of constant rains. The rain impedes the normal work of the demining squads and also emergency medical evacuation plans in case of an accident. During the year 2007, this factor represented nearly 25% of the workdays, that is to say, one of each four days destined for humanitarian demining operations was suspended due to this cause.
- (b) **High quantity of mineralized rocks:** The great quantity of existing mineralized stones in several of the affected areas has notably delayed the work. For this reason, the General Demining Command found it necessary to include this data, since January 2005, within Ecuador's operation results, in order to show the national and international community the difficulties that have been presented and to justify the decrease in operational performance.
- (c) **Communications network:** The bad state of communications networks have conditioned the medical evacuation plan to the availability of a helicopter and an air ambulance, in the case that the injured one should need to be transported to the city of Quito. This involves a dependence on favourable weather conditions for the development of humanitarian demining tasks.
- (d) **The Manual demining technique can not be applied in some areas:** Another difficulty has been that the manual demining technique is not applicable in 8 objectives of the Province of Loja and one objective in the Province of El Oro. This is due to the fact that the areas are located on river banks, which in many cases are covered by a great quantity of rock and, due to the consistency of the terrain, the mines are buried as deep as a few meters.
- (e) **Difficulty in accessing certain areas:** The eastern part of Ecuador presents great access problems to the border areas with the Republic of Peru. These areas can only be accessed by helicopter or in its place, by various days of travel on foot and by waterway.

16. Other factors that affect and delay the progress of humanitarian demining operations are the result of terrain irregularities, the dense and high vegetation (native to the area), the little precision of the available coordinates for certain objectives which complicates the search for the initial point of each minefield, among others, and the exposure to the tropical illnesses of this area such as yellow fever.

17. In light of the above circumstances as well as the work pending, Ecuador is requesting a total of eight (8) additional years to completely eliminate the threat of anti-personnel mines from its territory.

18. Although a lot of work has been carried out and some demining projects have taken place, the remaining mines still have a serious socioeconomic impact on affected communities.

The main productive activities affected by the remaining contamination include farming and mining production, as well as tourism.

19. Similarly, the border development between Ecuador and Peru, which is determined in great measure by the construction of the highways: Guayaquil – Piura (538 km in length), Arenillas – Sulla (244 km in length), Loja – Sullana (319 km in length), Loja – Sarameriza (690 km in length) and Mendez – Sarameriza (385 km in length), has been hampered by the presence of mines, therefore many of the communities which will benefit from these highways or from where materials for its construction are extracted, are affected by these minefields.

20. Taking into account that the objectives to be addressed during the extension period correspond to various Provinces, it was decided to complete the work Province by Province. By the start of the extension period in October 2009 Ecuador will increase the number of deminers to 100 deminers deployed to humanitarian demining operations. In addition to the increment in the number of deminers, Ecuador has tested new detectors that minimize the signals emitted by mineralized rocks while responding positively to anti-personnel mines. As a result of this, the AICMA/OAS, with the US cooperation support, provided new Mine lab F-3 detectors, which have been incorporated immediately to the demining squads in Tnte. Ortiz, obtaining during the first trimester of use, a considerable reduction in mineralized rocks being detected.

21. In the 9 objectives where demining can not be carried out utilizing the manual demining technique, in the Province of Loja (8) and El Oro (1), due to the fact that the areas correspond to river beds that are in most cases covered by rocks. For these cases, Ecuador is soliciting with the AICMA/OAS program and US cooperation, the loan of mechanical equipment that could be utilized in these objectives.

22. Humanitarian demining operations, in all objectives to be cleared, will be carried out through Technical Studies and clearance, as well as Certification or Internal Quality Assurance activities. This will be applied to all mined areas.

23. During the eight (8) additional years, Ecuador will work in 42 objectives in the Province of Morona Santiago, 10 objectives in the Province of Pastaza, 8 objectives in the Province of Loja, and 1 objective in the Province of El Oro, as well as 1 objective in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe.

24. The timetable for the 8 years details the work to be carried out beginning in October 2009, until the end of September 2017, period that corresponds to the solicited extension. In the period between January 2008 and September 2009, demining will continue on the basis of what was scheduled to take place before the extension request was submitted.

25. In general, the timetable presented for the 8 year extension period, has been elaborated considering each objective, taking into account the area, nature, quantity of existing mines, level of difficulty to reach the objectives, logistic situation and operational issues, which has permitted us to determine an approximate time for each objective.

26. It is estimated that the total amount necessary to carry out the remaining humanitarian demining work in Ecuador is approximately \$US 9,321,940. Ecuador will continue providing

funds for their national operation and plans to increase the amount allotted yearly to these operations. The balance will be solicited from the international donor community bilaterally as well as through international organizations.
