

Ninth meeting

Geneva, 25-28 November 2008

Item 13 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of requests submitted
under article 5

**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF THE TIME LIMIT SET IN ARTICLE 5
TO COMPLETE THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES**

Summary

Submitted by Senegal

1. Since 1982, Senegal has been confronted, in Casamance, with a low-intensity armed conflict led by the Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement (MFDC), whose aim is the independence of the region from Senegal. Because of this conflict, and especially since 1997, Casamance has had a serious problem of contamination by mines.
2. As early as 1999, after the entry into force of the Convention, Senegal established a National Commission to implement the Ottawa Convention but was unable to set up a demining programme because the conflict in the Casamance region actually grew in intensity during that period. Since the latest ceasefire agreement concluded between the parties on 31 December 2004, there has been a general lessening of tension throughout the Casamance region and a relative absence of armed hostilities between the parties, even though the armed MFDC groups have not abandoned their bases. This new situation has proved favourable for the initiation of preparations for the anti-mine action programme and the Government of Senegal has done everything in its power to set up the necessary structures for the execution of the programme, to enable demining activities to begin quickly and thus to try to comply with the obligations established within the Convention.

3. In early 2005, the Government adopted a legal and institutional framework for the anti-mine action sector. A law banning mines was promulgated by the President of the Republic on 3 August 2005. The decrees implementing that law which involve amendment of the statutes of the National Commission and the establishment of the Senegalese National Anti-Mine Action Centre (CNAMS) were adopted in August 2006. The director of the CNAMS was appointed in January 2007 and the centre, in Ziguinchor, became operational in August 2007.

4. A draft emergency study on the impact of mines in Casamance was conducted between October 2005 and April 2006 and documented the location and extent of mine contamination in the accessible areas of the natural region of Casamance. The study also measured the socio-economic impact of this contamination on the populations concerned. The project investigating teams visited 251 localities considered as potentially suspect; 93 of these localities were confirmed as contaminated by mines and/or explosive residues of war; a total of 149 suspect areas were identified in these contaminated localities. Over 90,000 people are considered to be directly affected by this contamination. The study estimates that approximately 11 square kilometres of land and 73 kilometres of tracks and/or paths are suspected of being contaminated by mines. The districts of Niaguiss, Nyassia and Diattacounda, situated between the Senegal River and the frontier with Guinea-Bissau, have been identified as the most contaminated.

5. Because of the still precarious security conditions in certain areas, however, the project was not able to visit all villages suspected of being affected by mines, particularly in the areas situated along the frontiers with Guinea-Bissau and Gambia. Similarly, a number of villages were found to be uninhabited and could not therefore be investigated. There is therefore no doubt that all the contaminated areas have not yet been discovered.

6. In November 2007, the National Commission and the CNAMS initiated a review of national anti-mine strategy in collaboration with all the experts, partners in development and development organizations present in the country and interested in this programme. The new strategic plan reaffirms the civil, neutral and humanitarian character of the programme and covers the period 2007-2015. The national strategy provides that the areas with the highest priority include the abandoned areas in which the population is resettling and the localities where the socio-economic impact of the presence of mines is considered to be high.

7. As of 1 May 2008, Senegal had a total of 748 recorded victims. Contamination by mines is seriously affecting the economic development of Casamance and, in particular, the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, transport of goods and tourism; it is also affecting trade between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

8. There is as yet in Casamance only limited professional marking corresponding to the international standards in force. A number of cases of traditional marking by villagers have nevertheless been noted. In the areas of greatest risk to the local inhabitants or returnees, the demining programme will promote rapid emergency marking in order to reduce risks.

9. Thanks to financing from the United States, the NGO Handicap International has been able to recruit, train and equip a first team of nine manual deminers. The determination of the target areas for the deployment of this team has been made in close cooperation with the CNAMS. For administrative reasons, it was not possible for deployment to take place before the end of 2007, but Belgium provided additional financing which enabled the team to be deployed, for a period of six months, in the area of Ziguinchor as from February 2008. These operations will continue until April 2009, thanks to additional financing amounting to €210,000 from France and Germany. To date, the only humanitarian demining activities in Casamance have taken place in the area of Kandialang near the town of Ziguinchor and in Mandina Macagne, Soucoute and Boutoute, which are situated within six kilometres of that town. An area of 27,000 square kilometres has thus been marked.

10. Despite all the efforts made, it was not possible to begin demining operations on the ground until early 2008; for this reason, Senegal is obliged to request an extension of the time limit set in article 5. Senegal requests an extension of seven years until 1 March 2016 in order to complete its humanitarian demining programme, a period which is consistent with Senegal's National Anti-Mine Action Strategy, 2007-2015, which has recently been formulated.

11. Since the Senegalese demining programme is in its initial stages, it is not yet possible to make precise projections concerning the potential viability of the operations being conducted. It should also be pointed out that the objective can be achieved only if the peace process continues favourably and if security conditions improve in all the areas affected by the conflict, which are, of course, those most affected by the existence of mines.

12. Despite the signing of the agreement in December 2004, the situation in the Casamance region has not improved as much as had been hoped and still remains very volatile, especially in the areas bordering Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, and has not facilitated the large-scale execution of demining operations. Many areas still remain inaccessible to the non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies operating in the region.

13. Senegal wanted the national agencies responsible for planning demining activities to be in place before allowing these activities to get under way. This decision favoured the appropriation of the activities conducted by the programme but the process of establishing the legal and institutional framework for the programme did not begin until March 2005 - after the signing of the agreement of 31 December 2004. It should be noted that it was in any event essential to await the results of the EUIMC impact study before going ahead and defining the major outlines of the demining strategy.

14. The anti-mine action programme, and more particularly demining activities, must have a positive effect on the peace process by promoting the restoration of trust between the parties, facilitating rehabilitation and development activities, and improving human security in the region. The observers and experts involved in the formulation of the national strategy have not only recognized that it was possible to begin the work immediately in certain areas which are now no longer of strategic military interest to the parties, but also recognized that demining must involve all parties to the conflict in order to attain the objective set. The programme is thus dependent on the momentum achieved in the peace process and it must be acknowledged that, since 2005, progress in this process has still been limited.

15. Even though the efforts to mobilize resources have achieved some success, it must be noted that, to date, regarding funds actually available on the ground for demining activities, only a contribution of €277,000 from Belgium has actually been disbursed; this contribution nevertheless enabled the pilot project conducted by Handicap International to get under way and it will end on 22 August 2008. The agreement which has recently been signed with France and Germany for an amount of €210,000 will enable operations to continue as from 15 October, after a six-week training session, for a period of six and a half months. Another financing agreement

for a total of €4 million has been concluded with the European Union. It should serve to strengthen the capacities of the CNAMS (€500,000) and to finance demining activities (€3.5 million).

16. As a very rough estimate, Senegal puts the cost of its demining operations up to the end of 2015 at approximately US\$ 30 million. This estimate is based, inter alia, on the fact that Senegal has been able to draw only very fragmentary lessons from the demining operations which began in February 2008, and the fact that it does not yet have information on the potential of this programme. However, the lessons learned have not for the moment invalidated the global projection of the amounts needed for the programme.

17. Senegal does not yet have a substantial number of operational partners or a large number of qualified deminers. In the near future, and in the light of financing available, Senegal hopes to benefit from the presence of at least two demining operators and approximately 200 deminers supported by various mechanical means. The budgetary projections mentioned above are also consistent with the size and duration of the operation which CNAMS hopes to be able to put in place in cooperation with the partners in development and operators.

18. The Government has already made available a contribution of approximately US\$ 1 million for the period 2007-2009; future contributions from the Government are still under discussion but it is more than likely that these amounts will increase. To date, proposed and/or expected contributions from the European Commission (€3.35 million) and Spain (probably around €3 million) for the demining programme will give added momentum to the activities currently being undertaken on the ground but will nevertheless be insufficient to meet the programme's needs up to 2015.

19. The existing estimates relating to areas contaminated, as obtained from the results of the EUIMC project, must be considered with caution. Some of the places in the region have in fact remained inaccessible to the project teams because of unsatisfactory security conditions, and other areas proved to be abandoned and therefore no study could be undertaken there. These unvisited - but highly suspect - places will therefore have to be the subject of investigations to define their status (whether positive or negative) and to identify the possible presence of suspect areas. Once additional investigations have been undertaken in the areas currently inaccessible,

Senegal expects the total area contaminated to be greater than what is known at present. It is therefore not realistic or credible at present to make projections about the areas which will have to be demined or those which will be “ruled out” through clearance techniques when the total suspect areas are not yet even known.

20. The programme will promote the implementation of the traditional range of land clearing techniques (general and technical surveys; reduction of areas; decontamination of battlefields; etc.) in order to concentrate demining efforts on areas in which the presence of mines is actually confirmed. These clearance activities will in practice make it unnecessary to demine all the areas identified as potentially suspect today. Thus these techniques will be used over the period October 2008-April 2009 in the 41 localities suspected of being lightly contaminated in order to confirm contamination or to delete them from the list of suspect areas.

21. The availability of mechanical equipment appropriate to conditions of terrain and climate in Casamance (brushcutter and/or small demining machine) could, if it comes about, give the manual demining teams precious support and increase efficiency.
