

Analysis of the request submitted by Ecuador for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention¹

Submitted by the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties on behalf of the States Parties mandated to analyse requests for extensions

10 November 2008

1. Ecuador ratified the Convention on 29 April 1999. The Convention entered into force for Ecuador on 1 October 1999. In its initial transparency report submitted on 29 March 2000, Ecuador reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Ecuador is obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 October 2009. Ecuador, believing that it will be unable to do so by that date submitted on 31 March 2008 to the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties (8MSP) a request for an extension of its deadline. On 1 August 2008, Ecuador submitted a revised executive summary of its extension request. Ecuador's request is for eight years (until September 2017).
2. The request indicates that impact studies carried out from 2002 – 2006 recorded 128 areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines totalling 621,034.50 square meters with mined areas located in five provinces (Morona Santiago, Zamora Chinchipe, Pastaza, Loja, and El Oro), as well as an area known as the Squared Kilometre of Tiwinza.
3. The request indicates that as of December 2007 Ecuador had complied with its Article 5 obligations in 53 of the 128 areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines with 118,707.39 square metres having been released. A total of 4,621 anti-personnel mines, 65 anti-tank mines and 8 UXO have been destroyed. The request further indicates that in the five provinces in question, a total of 75 areas remain to be addressed totalling 498,632.89 square meters. As well, impact studies are still being carried out in parts of two of these five provinces (Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe) to determine the precise extent of the implementation challenge. In addition, the request indicates that at the beginning of the extension period it is projected that a total of 42 sites will remain to be addressed totalling approximately 434,559 square meters.
4. As noted, Ecuador's request is for eight years (until September 2017) on the basis that work to address all challenges mentioned in paragraph 3 above would be addressed province by province. The request further indicates that this is a realistic time period for all known mined areas to be cleared using all available demining assets at a medium cost of approximately US\$ 2.1 million per year. The request also indicates that the time period requested takes into account increasing the demining capacity of demining squads from 60 to 100 deminers and the acquisition of mechanical equipment. The States Parties mandated to analyse requests submitted under Article 5 of the Convention (hereafter referred to as "the analysing group") noted that Ecuador was committing to take steps to increase capacity and the analysing group expects corresponding output gains be reflected in its annual projections of areas to be released during the extension period.

¹ In response to an invitation by the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties to comment on a draft analysis, Ecuador provided some clarifications that were incorporated into this final version of the analysis.

5. The request indicates the following as impeding circumstances: (a) Unfavourable meteorological conditions impede emergency medical evacuation plans and the normal work of demining squads; (b) A high quantity of mineralized rocks in several of the affected areas has delayed work; (c) Limited access to the areas in question means that a helicopter must be available for medical evacuation; (d) Traditional manual demining techniques cannot be used with respect to nine objectives; and, (e) Many areas can only be accessed by helicopter or by several days of travel on foot and by waterway.
6. The request provides annual projections of the number of areas and the total area to be released each year by province between October 2009 and September 2017. During the first year of the requested extension period (October 2009 to September 2010), 21,365 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago, during the second year 10,150 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago, during the third year 8,460 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago, during the fourth year 12,264 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago, during the fifth year 6,576 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago and Pastaza, during the sixth year 52,354 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago, Pastaza and Zamora Chinchipe, and, during the seventh and eighth years an estimated 333,390 square metres will be released in Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe.
7. The analysing group noted the significant annual increases of area to be released in last three years of the requested period relative to the first five years of this period and sought clarity from Ecuador. Ecuador responded by providing, on 13 September 2008, additional information indicating that the objectives to be addressed during the last three years of the requested extension period have not undergone an impact study, which means that the estimate of area is referential and that the actual area to be subject to demining remains to be delimited and will be less than the initial references. Ecuador further indicated that its budget for the requested extension period is largely constant (despite the relatively larger area to be released in the last three years) because it is assumed that the actual area to be demined will be similar to amounts in the first five years.
8. The request indicates that no time frame for initiating the work in the nine objectives in which manual clearance is not applicable have been provided due to the need to first secure mechanical equipment and that once secured parallel operations will be carried out in these areas. In addition, the request also includes a number of risks, such as climate, that could affect the timeline established for extension period.
9. The request indicates that Ecuador plans to address remaining areas through manual and mechanical demining (following “impact studies” of areas that have not yet been subject to impact studies). The vast majority of confirmed or suspected tasks are considered to be suitable for manual demining with nine tasks requiring mechanical demining. The request further indicates that Ecuador’s Manual on Humanitarian Demining Procedures is based on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). In addition, the request mentions methods and standards of controlling and assuring quality. The analysing group noted that what Ecuador defines as an “impact study” is actually more consistent with what the IMAS refers to as “technical survey” (i.e., a detailed topographical and technical investigation of known or suspected hazardous areas).

10. In the additional information provided to the 8MSP President on 13 September 2008, Ecuador indicates that total costs for implementation of Article 5 during the requested extension period will be approximately US\$ 16.67 million. Of this amount, Ecuador will assume costs totalling US\$ 1.08 million per year for a total of US\$ 8.64 million during the extension period. Funds from sources other than Ecuador's State budget would be sought for approximately US\$ 8.03 million or an average of approximately US\$ 1.0 million per year. The updated information provided by Ecuador contained detailed annual breakdowns of costs to be covered by sources other than the State budget with the most significant costs being for stipends and food for deminers (US\$ 2.88 million on the basis of 100 deminers receiving US\$ 10 per day, each day, for eight years) and the operation and maintenance of a helicopter (US\$ 2.16 million).
11. The analysing group noted that between 1999 and 2007 Ecuador had provided approximately 55 percent of all funds invested into implementation in Ecuador through constant State contributions of US\$ 500,000 per year. The analysing group further noted that Ecuador, through a commitment to also more than double its State contributions to US\$ 1.08 million per year, intended to cover the same proportion of costs during the extension period. In addition, the analysing group noted that, while detailed information was provided on costs to be covered through sources other than Ecuador's State budget, the request did not indicate what costs Ecuador itself would absorb through its annual contributions.
12. The request indicates that the release of land to date can be assumed to have had a significant positive socio-economic impact on Ecuador and its population and that concluding implementation during the extension period would result in additional such impacts, hence contributing to Ecuador's poverty reduction and development aims. In addition, the request indicates that a number of border development projects primarily concerning transportation infrastructure, oil exploration, tourism, farming and mining are still hampered by the presence of mines. Therefore, completing implementation will ensure that Ecuador can benefit from the productive use of previously mined areas.
13. The request includes other relevant information that may be of use to the States Parties in assessing and considering the request including a detailed set of tables illustrating the status, location and size of each area in question, maps of the areas, and a timeline for completion of work during the extension period.
14. The analysing group noted that constant progress in demining had been made by Ecuador since 2002 and that the request indicated a commitment to continue at a constant rate through the extension period. The analysing group further noted that, while the plan presented is workable, the fact that the request indicates a 100%+ increase in financing and increases in demining capacity suggests that Ecuador may find itself in a situation wherein it could proceed with implementation much faster than that suggested by the amount of time requested. The analysing group added that doing so could benefit both the Convention and Ecuador itself given the indication by Ecuador of the socio-economic benefits that will flow from demining.
15. The analysing group noted that given the importance of external support to ensure timely implementation, Ecuador could benefit from developing as soon as possible a resource mobilisation strategy that clarified the costs that Ecuador's State budget would cover as part of the overall costs of implementation.

16. The analysing group noted that the detailed accounting of the remaining mined areas provided by Ecuador would greatly assist both Ecuador and all States Parties in assessing progress in implementation during the extension period. In this regard, the analysing group noted that both could benefit if Ecuador provided updates relative to this accounting of areas at meetings of the Standing Committees, at the Second Review Conference and at Meetings of the States Parties.