



No: 680-1/2024

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, and has the honor to enclose herewith updated information in accordance with Article 7, Paragraph 2, of the Convention, covering the previous calendar year, i.e. the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction the assurances of its highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a circular official seal. The seal contains the text 'MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA REPUBLIQUE DE SERBIE' and 'GENÈVE' around the perimeter, with a smaller coat of arms in the center.

Geneva, 30 April 2024

Implementation Support Unit
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-
Personnel Mines and on their Destruction
GENEVA

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

UPDATED INFORMATION PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 7, PARAGRAPH 2 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

SUBMITTED 31 APRIL 2024

1 January 2023 - 31 December 2023

D. Areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines

As of 1 April 2024, there is 1 known area in the Republic of Serbia suspected to contain antipersonnel mines totalling **268,100 square metres***. See Annex II for complete list of the area. Area suspected to contain antipersonnel mines remains in 1 village in the Municipality of Bujanovac as follows:

Summary of areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines as of 1 April 2024

Municipality	Village	Number of areas known to contain anti-personnel mines	Number of areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Total number of areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Amount of area known to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Amount of area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Total amount of area known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	/	1	1	/	268,100	268,100
Total	1	/	1	1	/	268,100	268,100*

*Please note that the Republic of Serbia is facing with a problem of newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality. In October 2019, in the territory of the Bujanovac Municipality, at the request of representatives of local self-government, the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC) conducted survey and marking of locations suspected to be contaminated by groups of mines. These are locations where forest fires occurred (in August 2021, too), and according to eyewitnesses, explosions could be heard in several places after the fire broke out, indicating the existence of mines in these areas. Representatives of SMAC and Emergency Management Staff of the Municipality of Bujanovac, visited the sites and interviewed local residents, local community representatives, fire-fighters, as well as police and military representatives. Furthermore, mine suspected areas have been marked in order to clearly and visually warn of mine danger, as well as to ban the entry of population into mine suspected area. Mine warning signs have been posted in the areas of possible access to mined areas (roads, paths and other areas where movement of people is expected).

Given that the areas suspected to be contaminated with mines are located in the Municipality of Bujanovac, which is an area with multi-ethnic population, the whole area has been visibly marked with "Stop Mines" signs in Serbian and Albanian languages.

SMAC has developed and submitted non-technical survey project to ITF Enhancing Human Security, and transferred the funds that the Serbian Government allocated for 2023 demining operations in Bujanovac, in order for ITF to match these funds with available donor funds, so that this project can be implemented. Implementation of non-technical survey project of Bujanovac Municipality for which Serbia in March 2022 requested previous extension request in order to gather necessary information to design a work plan and project with greater certainty the amount of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that would be required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations has been suspended. A contractor has been selected and the project was expected to commence in 2023, however, due to certain security concerns, relevant Serbian authorities estimated that the commencement of the field operations should be delayed. SHA comprises the area within the Ground Safety Zone along the administrative line with Kosovo and Metohija. Fortunately, circumstances have changed and SMAC expects this project to commence in the coming months.

The non-technical survey project will include 2 mixed survey teams (1 Serbian and 1 Albanian team of 2 surveyors each), which will be fully trained and equipped to conduct required tasks. These activities will be supervised and monitored by SMAC and in cooperation with the local authorities.

The project will take up to 1 year and will focus on the areas where fire forests occurred and explosions could be heard, but will also include all the other areas in Bujanovac where the existence of other mine indicators might be reported. During this period, technical survey projects will be developed, as well as land release projects for the assessed areas. Simultaneously with survey activities, MRE activities will be conducted in all 59 villages of the Municipality of Bujanovac. Upon completion of this project, SMAC will have a clear picture of the contamination, and an updated work plan for the remaining mined area.

Having in mind inadequate financial resources, the remaining area to be cleared, and its characteristics, unregistered mine contaminated areas, newly identified mine suspected areas for which a non-technical survey project needs to be completed in order to design a work plan and project with greater certainty the amount of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that will be required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations, in March 2024, Serbia submitted a fourth request for an extension of the deadline for fulfilling of its mine clearance obligations under the Convention for a period of 2-years (31 December 2024-31 December 2026).

In 2023, the Government of Serbia allocated around 260,000 EUR from the state budget for demining operations.

These funds were matched through ITF Enhancing Human Security with available donor funds (the US and Republic of Korea donation). One project by SMAC was implemented in the Municipality of Bujanovac, total area of 122,200 sqm, with 1 UXO found and destroyed.

The Republic of Serbia remains committed to the completion of the Article 5 obligations, in order to primarily provide safety of local population, safe exploitation of woods, safe use of road communications, environmental protection, as well as reduction of fire risks.

SMAC, as a national mine coordinating authority has requested from the Serbian Government to continue to allocate funds in the years to follow. Despite the economic and overall situation, the Serbian Government has taken ownership of the problem, by continuous allocating of funds for demining operations. However, international support is needed in order to solve the overall mine clearance problem.

The Serbian Government has allocated around 260.000 EUR for demining operations in 2024. These funds have been transferred to IIF to match the funds with donor funds (the US and the Republic of Korea donations). SMAC developed projects for the remaining known contamination totalling 268,100 sqm, which will be implemented in 2024, in addition to non-technical survey project covering previously unknown contamination, which is also planned to be implemented in 2024.

Summary of projections for the amount of area (square metres) suspected to contain anti-personnel mines to be released 2024-2026

2024	Areas	1
	Area	268,100
Total	Areas	1*
	Area	268,100* + newly identified mine contaminated areas

***Newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality have not been indicated in the table, since the scope of it is yet to be determined.**

Project for non - technical survey of newly discovered mine suspected areas in Bujanovac is in SMAC's 2024 work plan adopted by the Serbian government.

Upon completion of this project, SMAC will have a clear picture of the contamination, upon which an updated work plan for the remaining contamination could be provided.

In addition to demining operations (around 260,000 EUR), the Serbian State Budget supports 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. On an annual basis, from the Serbian State Budget is allocated around 450.000 EUR for the work of the SMAC.

The Republic of Serbia carries out a number of efforts to ensure that the civilians from affected communities are not injured by mines, cluster munitions and other UXO including through the following methods:

-Marking;

The whole area suspected to be contaminated with various types of mines has been visibly marked with "STOP UXO" signs in Serbian and Albanian languages, given that it is an area with multiethnic population. Areas contaminated with cluster

munitions, air bombs - rockets and other UXO, have been also marked correspondingly. Marking is conducted by the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) and within its regular activities the SMAC periodically visits contaminated locations making sure that these signs remain replaced.

-Risk education;

Locals of the affected communities are being informed about demining activities through a number of means and media. Mine risk education has been conducted in schools and affected communities. In accordance with the IMAS, during demining operations, evacuation of people from houses, shops and other communal locations located within the zone of demining works is conducted. Suspension of traffic on the roads within the zone of demining operations is conducted, too. In relation to that, the SMAC coordinates activities with local authorities, school authorities and other relevant state bodies (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport), local media means in communities where demining operations are conducted.

The following methods have been employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- Non-technical survey
- Technical survey
- Clearance
- Mechanical demining
- Canine demining

In Serbia, an initial survey which includes collection of data and analysis of available documentation on mine emplacement is employed, as well as a non - technical survey (NTS), which follows after an analysis of previously collected data, conditions in the field, statements by local population, hunters, foresters, people dealing with exploitation of wood, representatives of Civil Protection and Police, amongst others. One significant indicator has been data on accidents that have occurred.

Non - technical survey determines borders of the suspected area, coordinates of the location, type of mines and other UXO, allocation of land, impact on environment.

Technical survey is employed to additionally collect information by technical methods on a suspected area and in case when the data collected by a non - technical survey are not sufficient for suspected areas to be declared hazardous or safe. Technical survey is done by the combination of several methods - manual detection by metal detectors and visually. Manual detection is conducted in prospections. The scheme and dimensions of a prospection depend on land configuration, and all in accordance with the IMAS.

Clearance is conducted in accordance with the IMAS. It is done by a manual method at the depth of 20 cm. Apart from a manual method, demining machines can be used, as well as dogs.

The size of the area to be cleared is determined on the basis of processed data which have been collected by a non-technical survey.

There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance. During survey and community liaison activities, women, men and children are consulted.

In 2023, there were no demining accidents in the Republic of Serbia.

Priority is to demine those areas which directly affect the local population. There are mine contaminated areas close to the settlement where the locals stopped cultivating their land due to fear of mines. Demining will contribute to an increase of

safety of local population, provide possibilities for safe exploitation of forest, cattle grazing and picking of mushrooms, which are one of the main sources of an income of local population.

As regards in-country national platform for dialogue, SMAC closely cooperates with the Bujanovac local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, in particular Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, as well as Embassies of donor countries.

In 2023, SMAC staff attended the following courses:

- In the period from 29 May 2023 until 9 June 2023, SMAC representatives participated in Mine Action Information Management System Administrator (IMSMA Core Administrator) training course, which was held in Spietz, Swiss Confederation, within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Work Program, implemented by the Swiss Government, through the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) and the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining.
- In the period from May 8 to 12, 2023, in Podgorica, Montenegro, SMAC participated in a quality management course in the field of demining and mine action, which was organized by the Norwegian People's Aid, in cooperation with the Rescue and Protection Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Montenegro. This course was conducted as part of the Norwegian People's Aid project that improves the quality management systems of national mine action authorities in the Western Balkans, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
- In the organization of the Norwegian People's Aid, in the period from May 22 to 26, 2023, in Belgrade, at the SMAC, a course on quality management in the field of demining and mine action was held. Fourteen trainees from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the company Yugoimport SDRP attended the course. The course was implemented within the framework of the Norwegian People's Aid project that improves the quality management systems of national mine action authorities in the Western Balkans.
- In the period from November 28 to 29, 2023, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, SMAC participated in the regional workshop "Lessons Learned and Next Steps", organized by the Norwegian People's Aid, (NPA). The workshop "Lessons learned and next steps" was a follow-up to the workshops "Assessment of needs and planning to improve the quality management capacity of national/state mine action authorities", which, was organized by the Norwegian People's Aid, in Sarajevo in December 2022 and in Belgrade, May 2023.

In 2023, training courses based on SMAC's training programme for educators for mine and ERW Education, were implemented, namely 2 EORE trainings of trainers courses were held with 13 attendees from different construction related public companies being trained on the dangers of ERW. Trainers were SMAC staff who underwent Training of trainers for conducting explosive ordnance disposal training course level 1 (EOD level 1) and level 2 (EOD Level 2) - the project implemented within the cooperation of SMAC with the Ministry of Defence, and the financial support of the Delegation of the European Union in Belgrade, in 2021.

Pursuant to Article 35 of the Law on Ministries, SMAC conducts expert works in the field of humanitarian demining related, among others, to educating populations of mine/ERW risk.

In line with Oslo Action Plan, Action #28, and noting that SMAC is the only institution responsible for conducting training in RE, SMAC has developed its own program for recognizing explosive remnants of war in accordance with IMAS and submitted it to the Ministry of Education for verification, which verified it in March 2021.

In line with Action #31 of the Oslo Action Plan, the purpose of the SMAC training is to build national capacities to educate trainees (members of local self-governments, civil protection, hunters and construction workers engaged in excavation works in the ERW contaminated areas) in the field of mine action and to enable them to improve knowledge and ability to recognize ERW in the Republic of Serbia. In addition to SMAC staff, who will be engaged as trainers, experts from the Ministry of Interior will also be engaged, so that different aspects and training modules, among others, the basics of ERW recognition, international mine action standards, medical aspect, etc. will be covered. In relation to that, the SMAC coordinates activities with local authorities, school authorities and other relevant state bodies (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport), local media means in communities where demining operations are conducted.

In line with Action #29, local at-risk populations are being informed about demining activities through a number of means and media. Mine risk education was conducted in schools and local communities. In accordance with the IMAS, during demining operations, evacuation of people from houses, shops and other communal locations located within the zone of demining works is conducted. Suspension of traffic on the roads within the zone of demining operations is conducted. Accordingly, given that in Serbia, the areas suspected to be contaminated with mines are located in the Municipality of Bujanovac, which is an area with multi-ethnic population, the whole area has been visibly marked with "Stop Mines" signs in Serbian and Albanian languages. During survey and community liaison activities, women, men and children are consulted. In addition, there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance.

New Decree on Protection against ERW is about to be adopted by the Government - it was developed by SMAC and Ministry of Interior. This decree will introduce land release concept, not defined in the former decree, and also the need for development of national standards, which have not been developed in Serbia so far. In the meantime, standards, i.e., 3 chapters land release, glossary and quality management, have been developed within NPA Project Enhancing Quality Management Systems of National Mine Action Authorities and Centers in Western Balkans in late 2023.

E. Technical characteristics of anti-personnel mines

Please note that the areas in the Municipality of Bujanovac are contaminated with groups of mines of an unknown origin and types having been placed in accordance with no particular pattern and without any minefield records of it.

The Republic of Serbia has no additional information on the technical characteristics of anti-personnel mines. See the report submitted in 2021 for information that has already been provided by the Republic of Serbia.

H. Cooperation and Assistance

The Republic of Serbia is a State Party, which is not in a position to provide financial assistance, but it is able to share experience and lessons learned from the on-going and completed operations as concerns mine survey/clearance and training. SMAC retains vast expertise in mine clearance, in particular as regards survey, project tasks developing, and quality control and governing of demining project tasks.

Within NPA Project Enhancing Quality Management Systems of National Mine Action Authorities and Centers in Western Balkans, NPA has hired a consultant from Risky Gmbh in Switzerland, as of March 1st 2023, to conduct a detailed capacity assessment of SMAC to identify gaps and discuss required improvements/action points and priorities, namely to develop NMAS chapters as prioritized by SMAC. By the end of 2023, three chapters have been developed - land release, glossary and quality management. Further National Standards are planned to be developed in the coming period, e.g. chapter on IM.

In February 2023, SMAC and Academy of Technical and Educational Vocational Studies Niš signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation, which envisages the enhancement of mutual development cooperation in the field of mine action. We expect that, among other things, this will lead to more concrete steps regarding the use of drones in survey operations.

In March 2023, at the invitation of the Protection and Rescue Directorate of the Republic of North Macedonia, and through the SEEMACC regional cooperation, representatives of SMAC visited the Directorate, in order to provide technical assistance and support in detection of aerial bombs by engaging SMAC equipment and experts for the purpose of in depth scanning of terrain. The aerial bombs were from the WW2 and the equipment used by the SMAC on that occasion was the US donation to the SMAC.

In April 2023, SMAC signed MoU with the US based Diving Safety Management Service Ltd. in the field of mine action. In order to improve and strengthen the capacity of the Republic of Serbia in the field of underwater demining, SMAC has submitted a request for membership in the International Association of Diving Contractors (ADCI) based in Houston, USA.

The request was approved in November 2023 and the SMAC, as an associate member, became part of the community that fosters the highest possible level of safety in the practice of commercial diving and underwater operations, as well as appropriate and adequate training of personnel.

In May 2023 and December 2023, SMAC participated at the 30th and 31st Meeting of the South Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC).

SMAC and UK based DRAGON Group have signed the Memorandum of Understanding regarding Cooperation and EOD Training. In September 2023, they jointly organized the first EOD 3 + training course, which has been conducted as a result of this formally ratified agreement. Among the participants were trainees from Colombia, UK, France, Nepal, Serbia, and South Sudan; representing UNMAS, TDI, FSD and G4S.

In order for SMAC to create an effective system for information management in mine action, in August 2022, the Donation Agreement has been signed between the GICHD and SMAC, whereas SMAC will be implementing IMSMA Core over a project period of 1 year.

In March 2023, GICHD IM advisors visited SMAC to get a better understanding of the context and requirements of SMAC as required to finalize the needs documentation. In 2024, SMAC is continuing its work on implementation of IMSMA Core and establishment of a centralized database aimed at improving data quality, accessibility, and sharing at SMAC and with external stakeholders, as well as bringing informed decisions when it comes to prioritization and planning of activities. In early 2024, the work was focused on data migration and data cleaning, resulting in IMSMA Core Version 1 being presented to the SMAC.

Representatives of SMAC participated at the Third Global Conference on the Assistance to Victims of AP Mines and other EO in a Disability Rights Context, that took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in October 2023.

SMAC participated at the GICHD Innovation Conference, that took place in November 2023, in Geneva, presenting "Integrated Navigation System for Inspection of Minefields" which is based on combination robotics, unmanned aerial vehicle, integrated sensor system which can contribute to organizations improving the efficiency of their operations while minimizing the risk to personnel.

Based on the Conclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, on July 18, 2023, the Ministry of Defense as the transferor and the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia as transferee of property, completed handover of the former Military complex "Velika Moštanica", which was included in the Master plan of the Serbian Army.

The "Velika Moštanica" military complex is located in Belgrade and consists of 16 buildings on an area of 3 hectares. It is planned that the military complex with classrooms and premises, as well as training grounds within the complex, among other things, will be used for organizing and conducting EOD training courses and EORE courses in accordance with IMAS standards. Also, the existing buildings and training grounds within the complex provide the opportunity to work on the development and testing of new technologies and innovations in mine action.

Annex II: Areas known and suspected to contain anti-personnel mines as of 1 April 2024, and the estimated date of completion

Municipality	Village	Longitude	Latitude	Area known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square meters)	Type and quantity of anti-personnel mines	Estimated period when mines were emplaced	Estimated date of completion (year-end)
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	21°47'16'' E	42°35'22'' N	268,100	Groups of mines of unknown type and quantity	2000-2001	2024 -2026
Total	1*			268,100* +newly identified mine contaminated area			

*Newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality have not been indicated in the table, since the scope of it is yet to be determined. Upon the provision of funds for field operations, we expect the commencement of the assessment of the previously unrecorded anti-personnel mine contamination in the course of 2024 (non-technical survey project accompanied with MRE in all villages of the Bujanovac Municipality). Upon completion of this assessment, SMAC will have a clear picture of the contamination, and an updated work plan for the remaining contamination could be provided.

Annex III: Areas released, 1 January 2023-31 December 2023

Municipality	Village	Longitude	Latitude	Cancelled area (square meters)	Reduced area (square meters)	Cleared area (square meters)	Total area released (square meters)	Number of anti-personnel mines destroyed	Number of other explosive items destroyed
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	21°47'16'' E	42°35'22'' N	/	/	122.200	122.200	/	1
TOTAL	1	/	/	/	/	122.200	122.200	/	1