

# **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 Tajikistan

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### **Introduction**

1. Tajikistan's landmines contamination arises from the following three specific situations:
  - a) Russian forces used landmines on the Tajik-Afghan Border (TAB) during the period of 1992-1998 in order to protect the border and their border posts from extremist groups attempting to enter Tajikistan from Afghanistan.
  - b) Uzbekistan forces mined areas on the Tajik-Uzbek Border (TUB) (Tajikistan's Western and Northern borders, primarily in the Sugd Region) during the period of 2000-2001 in order to protect the border from extremist groups and bandit formations attempting to enter Uzbekistan from Tajikistan.
  - c) The Central Region (CR) of the country was contaminated by landmines, submunition and other Explosive Remnants of War during the 1992-1997 civil war.
2. Nearly 10 years after the end of the civil war, landmines continued to create obstacles for the development of Tajikistan, limiting access to grazing and agricultural land and affecting farming, wood gathering, grazing and other activities related to rural life. A total of 793 mine accidents (443 survivors, 352 fatalities) have been reported in the period of 1992 to 2008.

### **What is the status of work conducted to date under Tajikistan's national demining programme?**

3. In order to confront this issue the Tajikistan Mine Action Center (TMAC) was established on 20 June 2003 as the executive body of the national mine action authority, the Interministerial Commission on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIIHL), chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Security. The TMAC works to implement state administration of the landmine issue and coordinates the cooperation of activities of ministries and departments, local executive branch bodies, as well as other bodies (state and non-state, including international entities). TMAC's tasks include the coordination and monitoring of all mine action activities and is responsible for developing national mine action plans, national standards and other strategic documents, undertaking the development, priority selection, planning, coordination of operations and presenting certificates of cleared areas to local authorities.
4. In 2003-2005 an initial impact survey was carried out by TMAC's partner, the Fondation Suisse de Deminage (FSD), identifying 146 suspected hazardous areas (SHA) covering a total of 49,637,637m<sup>2</sup>. Following the impact survey, requests for clearance and technical survey from the government, local authorities and ministries identified an additional 13 SHA's covering 858,018 m<sup>2</sup>. Finally, during initial clearance operations an additional 172,617 m<sup>2</sup> were recorded. Therefore, the original total contamination in Tajikistan included 159 SHA's covering a total of 50,668,272 m<sup>2</sup> with 62 SHAs of an approximately total size of 26,911,369 m<sup>2</sup> corresponds to areas on the TAB, 57 SHAs of an approximately total size of 1,726,000 m<sup>2</sup> corresponds to areas on the TUB and 40 SHAs of an approximate total size of 22,030,903 m<sup>2</sup> corresponds to areas in the CR.

5. In addition to the above areas identified in the TAB area, in 2006 the Russian Border Forces handed over registries which included 384 minefield records identifying 607 minefields with an approximate size of 8,567,500m<sup>2</sup>.
6. Due to the lack of experience of the initial survey teams, lack of minefield records, and other important information as well as proper survey equipment, the first impact survey did not yield high quality results. The sizes of SHAs were miscalculated and their descriptions were not clearly recorded. In addition, access to the TAB and TUB areas were limited, remaining limited in the case of the later. For this reason it has been necessary to undertake re-survey of these areas.
7. As of December 2008, 24,094,139 m<sup>2</sup> of land has been released in the TAB area culminating in the destruction of 7,253 AP mines, 4 AT mines and 220 explosive devises. Of this, 22,904,759 m<sup>2</sup> have been released through re-survey and land release projects and 1,189,280 m<sup>2</sup> have been released through mine clearance. During re-survey operations 16 SHA's were cancelled and 82 new mined areas identified. To date, work in 13 mined areas has been completed. It is important to note that during ongoing resurvey of mined areas in Russian registries it was acknowledged that the majority of minefields were destroyed due to flooding of the Panj river and other minefield were destroyed when the mine's self-destruction system was activated. The work remaining in the TAB area includes 115 confirmed mined areas with an approximate size of 5,601,370 m<sup>2</sup> and an additional 360 mined areas with an approximate size of 5,794,000 m<sup>2</sup> pending re-survey.
8. As of December 2008, 18,718,248 m<sup>2</sup> of land has been released in the CR culminating in the destruction of 2,691 AP mines, 8 AT mines and 1,664 explosive devises. Of this, 17,637,608 m<sup>2</sup> have been released through resurvey and land release projects and 1,080,640 m<sup>2</sup> have been released through mine clearance. During re-survey operations 2 SHA's have been cancelled and 11 new mined areas have been identified. Also, an additional 141, 606 m<sup>2</sup> have been identified as affected. To date, work in 13 mined areas has been completed. The work remaining in the CR includes 36 mined areas with an approximate size of 3,454,261m<sup>2</sup> including 19 confirmed mined areas and 17 mined areas pending re-survey.
9. As of December 2008, operations have not initiated in the TUB area as clearance of areas on the TUB depends on political decision and agreement between both governments. There are currently efforts being made to overcome these issues. Unfortunately there is no timeline for resolution. Additionally, the SHAs identified by the initial survey were assessed by a *Distance Survey* method which is not accepted as an accurate means to measure areas. Therefore, the sizes of these areas are not endorsed by the TMAC and should be removed from the total until the conditions exist in which all SHAs in the TUB can be properly surveyed. The work remaining includes 57 SHAs with an unknown size.
10. Since 2001, \$12,834,795 has been invested in mine action in Tajikistan with \$9,760,795 coming from the international community and \$3,074,000 provided by the government of Tajikistan in the form of technical support.

**What are the circumstances that impede Tajikistan from destroying all AP mines in mined areas by its deadline?**

11. Tajikistan will be unable to fulfill its Article 5 obligations by its deadline, 1 April 2010, for the reasons listed below:

- a. **Delay in starting:** Demining programme of Tajikistan began 4 years after the entry into force of the Convention. This left only 6 years for Tajikistan to complete its Article 5 responsibilities.
- b. **Only manual demining employed:** During the first 3 years, TMAC's mine action operations mainly used manual clearance with a small number of demining teams. Tajikistan began employing Mine Detecting Dogs and new strategies in 2006.
- c. **Difficult terrain:** Tajikistan is a highly mountainous country with many of the SHAs located in areas that are difficult to access. This has presented a number of challenges to our work.
- d. **Weather:** Extreme weather conditions are another challenge of clearance operations. Many of the SHA's are only accessible 3-4 months of the year (i.e. only during the summer months).
- e. **Financing:** Insufficient funds for the programme have presented operational challenges. On several occasions, funds have been provided late in the year resulting in the delay of operations and leaving a short work window.
- f. **Minefield records:** The minefield records of the Russian Military have proved to be dangerously inaccurate. Border areas that were difficult to access were mined using cluster bombs that spread sub munitions over a wide area.
- g. **Border dispute with Uzbekistan:** As of present, Uzbekistan is not cooperating with Tajikistan counterparts on the issue of border mine clearance, the maps of the mined areas and information on cleared areas are not submitted and as a result it is not possible to inform the local population about the risk and about land that has been cleared for their use. Significantly, only 85 percent of the border line mentioned above has been defined by the present international legal order. These mined areas are the most noteworthy cause of concern as numerous people have suffered mine accidents in these areas.

**What is the proposed duration of the extension request and what are the reasons for this amount of time?**

- 12. In order to complete its obligations under Article 5, Tajikistan is requesting an extension period of 10 years (until 1 April 2020). This time frame is based on historical experience and current and future additional capacity, taking into account relevant assumptions based on climate, terrain, weather and other contingencies.

**What are the humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implication of the extension?**

- 13. Currently, 456,790 people live in mine-affected areas, approximately 70% of which are women and children. Zones of risks are usually located in hills and mountains where most villages are located. These areas negatively impact the development of the region. Usually the threat of mines/UXO and cluster munitions is greatest when people come to mountain areas to pasture their sheep. In addition, most women and children of mountainous areas leave their home in summer to prepare food for winter from milk products in the mountains or hills where these hazards exist.
- 14. Mined areas also have a negative impact on the daily activities and development initiatives of the communities such as the following:
  - a. collecting wood for food and winter
  - b. collecting food for the domestic animal or pasture them
  - c. geological research in the mountains

- d. accessing fresh water
- e. development of animal husbandry
- f. development of horticulture
- g. reinforcement of river banks
- h. reconstruction of the roads, power lines

In addition to this, there are rare and wild animals that perish from mine explosions.

### **What is Tajikistan's plan to fulfill its obligations during the extension period?**

15. By the end of 2009 all re-survey and battle area clearance operations will be completed and all areas will be reduced as far as possible by survey teams. At this point TMAC will have an increasingly accurate picture of the number of areas to be addressed, their sizes and coordinates.
16. In areas on the TAB, manual clearance will be increased year to year. Clearance of all areas in the TAB, accessible for the MDMs, will be completed by the end of 2011 and areas accessible for MDDs by the end of 2016. After this all mine action capacity will be directed towards manual clearance activities and the number of manual clearance teams will be increased.
17. As the areas in the TAB are not accessible to the local population, it is difficult to find criteria for prioritization. Prioritization of the areas for clearance in the TAB will be established according to the State and Local plans for development projects in the TAB, conversation with the local authorities, organisations working in these areas and the Main Department of the Border Guard of the Committee of National Security. Decision on prioritization will be made considering the level of use of the areas by the local population.
18. In the CR manual clearance will also increase year to year. Clearance of the areas in the CR, suitable for MDDs will be completed by the end of 2012. After this all mine action capacity will be directed towards manual clearance activities and the number of manual clearance teams will be increased.
19. Prioritization of the areas for clearance in the CR will be established according to the conversation with the Local Authorities and other organisations working in area. Decision on prioritization will be made considering a defined set of criteria including activities of the population in proximity to affected areas, number of victims, occurrence of last accident, size of area, planned development projects, land use before becoming affected, number of beneficiaries, type of activities impeded, amongst others.
20. As mentioned, mine clearance of the TUB depends on political decision and agreement between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. If an agreement is reached during the extension period, the survey teams will start re-survey operations. During re-survey activities survey teams will visit the TUB, define and recognize the actual number of SHAs located in the territory of Tajikistan, calculate their estimated size and register them according to the IMSMA forms. After the Re-survey, TMAC will plan technical survey and clearance operations in the TUB.
21. It is projected that 3,000,000m<sup>2</sup> will be released through survey activities which will conclude in 2009, 3,400,000m<sup>2</sup> will be released through mechanical demining over the period of 2009-2011, 2,300,000m<sup>2</sup> will be released by mine detection dogs over the period of 2009-2016, and 5, 960,000 square meters will be released by manual demining over the period of 2009-2019.

**What are the financial and technical means available to Tajikistan to fulfill its obligations during the extension period?**

22. The work plan is based on possible potentials of the Mine Action Programme. In order to complete operations by the extensions deadline the TMAC will rely on 8 multipurpose (technical survey, demining, EOD) teams (9 deminers on each team) to be established within FSD and 2 technical survey teams (5 deminers on each team) to be established within the Ministry of Defence, 2 Survey teams, 1 machine for mechanical demining (MDM) and 6 MDD team (2 dog on each team).
23. A variety of technical and non-technical means have been used to address affected areas. The technical means include manual clearance (using full excavation as well as manual detection techniques), mine detection dogs, new mine collection techniques and non-standard mechanical support to demining operations. Non-technical means include the release of land through re-survey as well as through new technical survey methods. These methods are governed by National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), some of which are currently under development, which take their lead from International Mine Action Standards and are modified to reflect the realities of Tajikistan's physical geography, terrain and weather conditions. Furthermore, the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the operator, FSD, are approved by TMAC.
24. All clearance operations are controlled internally and externally. Internal QC is conducted by the demining agency and external QC by the TMAC QC team. TMAC's quality assurance officers confirm that methods and procedures remain in accordance with FSD SOPs, as well as NMAS and applicable IMAS. The external TMAC QA&QC teams provided QA&QC on all trainings, equipment, methodologies and implementation of the clearance process. Another vital part of the QA&QC team responsibility is post clearance sampling, verification, certification, and handover of cleared land. Under the auspices of the QA&QC team, all records and certificates are cross-referenced and then entered into the IMSMA database.
25. Beginning in 2009 the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe will provide capacity building support for the creation of a Technical Survey Team under the Ministry of Defense. This team will operate only in the TAB area and will conduct technical survey operations in the minefields to detect their exact location, mark border of minefields and prepare the working site for clearance teams.
26. It is realistic that operations could be completed with the above components in place at an annual average cost of \$3.8 million, of which \$550,000 will be provided on an annual basis by the government of Tajikistan.