Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

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Consideration of requests submitted under article 5

Request for extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with article 5 of the Convention

Executive summary

Submitted by Chile

1. The vast majority of the existing minefields in Chile originated during the 1970s, at a time when Chile was embroiled in a series of crises with neighbouring countries. Because all existing mines in the country were laid by the Armed Forces, Chile has records of the location and contents of every minefield and hazardous area within its national territory. It is important to point out that the term "hazardous area" is defined as an area that was cleared prior to the entry into force for Chile of the Convention and in relation to which all mines listed in existing records of emplacement have not been found.

2. According to these records, the initial challenge will include 183 minefields and 16 hazardous areas, comprising a total of 23,207,281 square metres in six regions of the country: Arica y Parinacota, Tarapacá, Antofagasta, Valparaíso, Santiago and Magallanes y Antártica Chilena. Records indicate that these mined areas contain a total of 123,421 anti-personnel mines and 58,393 anti-tank mines.

3. For the most part, these minefields and hazardous areas are located in areas that do not directly affect the population. Moreover, they have all been duly marked and fenced, and are monitored continuously by the Armed Forces. This has enabled Chile to limit the number of victims of anti-personnel mines. From 1970 to the present, there have been 43 victims – a figure unchanged since 2005.

4. It should be pointed out that, as an added security measure, the total surface area specified (23,207,281 square metres) includes a security perimeter. This is an additional surface area that extends beyond the mined area described in records of existing mine emplacements. The purpose of this additional area is to provide a buffer for the blast radius that would be produced by an explosion, given that the majority of the minefields in Chile are mixed, meaning that they consist of both anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. The size of the additional area is different for each mined area since it depends primarily on the configuration and position of the mines in each location. It also depends on the conditions

and features of the terrain where the mined areas are located, such as the precipitation from rain or snow recorded for the area, land gradients, soil type, existence of nearby access routes, etc.

5. Following the signature and ratification by Chile of the Convention, it was decided that the national defence institutions would assume responsibility for the clearance and removal of anti-personnel mines in the national territory. To that end, in 2002, the National Mine Clearance Commission was established. It serves as an advisory body to the President of the Republic and is composed of the Minister of National Defence, who chairs the Commission, as well as representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Health and the Armed Forces. In addition, Chile has a high-level panel composed of advisers from the above-mentioned ministries, the defence institutions and other public services. NGOs working in areas related to the implementation of the Convention have been invited to participate in the panel and, in certain instances, have been included in its discussions.

6. From 2004 — when the first demining unit of the Chilean Army was deployed to the region of Arica y Parinacota — to December 2010, nine units were set up and trained. Together they comprise four manual and six mechanical demining units and represent a considerable increase in Chile's demining capacity. There are plans to set up a fifth manual unit in 2011.

7. As of March 2011, a total of 54 mined areas (24 with certification pending), comprising a total of 9,383,359 square metres, had been processed, and in the course of operations, a total of 28,213 anti-personnel and 12,356 anti-tank mines had been destroyed. Of the 9,383,359 square metres, a total of 7,056,555 square metres was processed using non-technical methods. A total of 144 mined areas, comprising a total of 13,823,922 square metres, remain to be processed, and in 24 areas, certification is pending. According to records, the areas not yet processed or certified contain a total of 95,208 anti-personnel and 46,037 anti-tank mines.

8. The safety of demining operations, for both the deminers and the civilian population, is unquestionably the primary focus when carrying out this technical work. Demining operations in Chile are broken down into four phases: planning, preparation, clearance and certification. In conducting demining operations, Chile uses manual demining techniques, including visual detection, the tripwire or grappling-hook technique, vegetation clearance, metal-detector use, excavation and prodding, and the Air-Spade clearance procedure. Mines are destroyed in situ. Chile also uses mechanical clearance techniques, carrying out the work in three stages: preparation of the site; clearance inside the area delimited by the technical survey and inside the contaminated area; and extension of clearance outside the perimeter of the area. In addition to these methods, Chile conducts land release operations using non-technical methods in keeping with national protocols for land release. These activities are carried out in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), following which the areas are subject to a rigorous certification procedure before being released.

9. Technical surveys, based on existing historical data, are conducted for each hazardous area, and in most cases result in a decision to carry out the work with mechanical equipment, or else a combination of manual and mechanical methods in sectors where the soil type does not permit the exclusive use of mechanical equipment. The method to be used will thus depend on the results of the technical surveys conducted in each hazardous area, which specifically identify in each case the areas in which to search for missing mines. Mechanical or manual assets, or a combination of both, may then be used for this purpose. However, as a general rule, preference is given to mechanical assets for large surface areas.

10. Since it began implementing article 5, Chile has provided the majority of the resources devoted to these activities through targeted annual budget allocations. Since the start of its demining operations, Chile has received approximately US$ 2.3 million from international sources. These international inputs were received at the outset of activities related to implementation and consisted mainly of personal protection equipment, telecommunications equipment, support equipment, infrastructure, etc. The Government of Chile has invested a total of US$ 27.2 million in demining operations.

11. The main circumstances preventing Chile from complying with its obligations under article 5 of the Convention relate to the obvious limitations imposed by the geographic and climatic conditions prevalent in most of the areas where operations are required. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the hardships posed by the terrain and the climate affect not only vehicle access and supply of the demining units but also the demining staff who work in such conditions, which take a heavy physical and psychological toll. Added to the stress of performing an inherently dangerous job is the dehydration produced by high temperatures, which in turn are intensified by the use of protective equipment weighing an average of 25 kilos. To this must further be added the diminished oxygen supply characteristic of altitudes above 3,500 metres, which translates into the need for shorter working days to allow staff to maintain proper concentration levels for performing their work. These difficult conditions also exist in the camps, given that the lack of oxygen is compounded by the extreme daily temperature variations typical of desert areas, which are made worse by the effects of altitude. Moreover, consideration must be given to the natural wear and tear placed on demining machinery, which is operated in terrain conditions that have been described as “extreme” by manufacturers, as well as by foreign evaluators and observers who have visited our country.

12. As already indicated, the mined areas are duly fenced and marked, and most are far from populated areas; hence, they do not represent a major risk to civilians. However, since both the perception of the risk and its actual level may fluctuate depending on the nation’s needs, if an area is considered to pose a risk to the population, it will be dealt with as a matter of priority alongside any work already in progress. The interest shown by enterprises in mineral or other resource extraction may give rise to economic implications, and some enterprises have already requested background data with a view to conducting exploration in tracts located close to mined areas. If a particular area is considered to be a useful asset to the development of the community, as is the case with humanitarian implications, it will be addressed as a matter of priority alongside any work already in progress. In this connection, it should also be mentioned that private individuals and companies interested in carrying out productive activities in areas near minefields are supplied with all the information needed to enable them to pursue their activities safely. Such information is supplied at the local level through the demining units in each region.

13. Chile is requesting an extension period of eight years (until 1 March 2020) in order to discharge its obligations under article 5. The amount of time requested is based on the experience gained and lessons learned over the past three years from all the operating units and from the incorporation of five mechanical units in 2008. Consideration was also given to the need for training relief crews, updating personal protection equipment, support equipment, camps and demining machinery, as well as the possible integration of new technologies to help make the best use of available assets.

14. During the extension period, Chile plans to schedule the work according to the following timetable: in 2012, processing and certification of 24 areas, comprising a total of 1,584,512 square metres; in 2013, processing and certification of 26 areas, comprising a total of 1,410,605 square metres; in 2014, processing and certification of 20 areas, comprising a total of 4,221,145 square metres; in 2015, processing and certification of 11 areas, comprising a total of 932,321 square metres; in 2016, processing and certification of

18 areas, comprising a total of 1,684,192 square metres; in 2017, processing and certification of 15 areas, comprising a total of 3,244,659 square metres and certification of 16 areas; in 2018, processing and certification of 11 areas, comprising a total of 1,021,889 square metres; in 2019, processing and certification of 2 areas, comprising a total of 70,999 square metres; and in 2020, processing and certification of 1 area, comprising a total of 17,940 square metres.

15. The cost of the operations for the period 2011–2020 is estimated at US$ 61.3 million, which will be covered by the State of Chile.