
**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**

28 September 2011
English
Original: French

Eleventh meeting

Phnom Penh, 28 November–2 December 2011

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of requests submitted under article 5

**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 the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The presumed or confirmed use of anti-personnel mines, mainly in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), stems from the history of numerous armed conflicts that affected the Republic of the Congo after independence. After 1960, in the early days of independence, there came a period of wars of secession: Katanga province seceded, followed by Kasai, and this is when anti-personnel mines were first used. Since then, the various protagonists in successive conflicts have employed anti-personnel mines extensively to achieve their military objectives. From 1975 to 1977, during the turbulent period of rebellions, in order to make the border more secure and prevent incursions by combatants opposed to the Angolan and Zairean regimes, the two Governments resorted to mining their common border, thereby obstructing communication routes and contaminating the fields and hunting grounds used by local people. Mines were also used between 1996 and 2002, during the wars of liberation.

2. The circumstances of the use of anti-personnel mines in DRC can therefore be summarized as follows: they were used so extensively and scattered so widely across the national territory, without references, plans or other indications, that locating or quantifying them in DRC territory poses enormous problems; hence the difficulty of estimating the scale of the problem of anti-personnel mines in DRC. This accounts for the lack of detail in the data entered in the database since the Convention entered into force in DRC.

3. The humanitarian, social, economic and environmental implications are enormous, particularly in north-eastern parts of Katanga, Kisangani (Orientale province), the areas around Dimbelenge and Dekese (Kasai-Occidental province), the northern part of Maniema province and the south-eastern part of Equateur, where the suspected or confirmed presence of anti-personnel mines continues to this day to constitute a major obstacle to reviving agricultural and economic activities in the worst-affected communities. The populations directly affected are those residing in these areas, but also refugees and internally displaced

persons, of whom a significant number come from these regions and are bound to return home.

4. Before DRC acceded to the Convention, initial reports and impact assessments had been taking place since 1996, resulting in the classification of 182 suspected mined areas. Data collection was carried out by various national organizations (the Office for Development Action and Emergencies (BADU), Action pour le Développement Intégral des Communautés Déplacées (ADIC), the Agency for the Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law in Central Africa (ADDIHAC), Synergie pour la Lutte Anti Mine (SYLAM), Tosalisana, Humanitas Ubangi, “people power committees”, the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI)) and other national bodies and individuals, such as the Congolese National Army, the Ministry of National Defence, military staff, the Government and well-known public figures) in the different regions affected but was somewhat disorganized, giving rise to omissions and duplication. Of these 182 areas, only 13 had been cleared by 2002, with 739 mines destroyed: Handicap International Belgium carried out mine clearance operations in Kisangani and Ituri, while the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) did likewise in Sud-Kivu.

5. In 2002, DRC became party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Later that same year, the National Commission against Anti-personnel Mines was created by ministerial decree. In 2003, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre in DRC (UNMACC) was formally appointed to organize and monitor the quality of mine clearance operations within the country. The year 2008 saw the creation of a National Focal Point on Mine Action (PFNLAM) for DRC: bringing together representatives of all ministries and State public services involved in mine action, and consisting of a plenary body, a coordination office and seven specialized units, this inter-ministerial body is responsible for managing, coordinating and regulating action on anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. On 10 February 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the infrastructure unit of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works and Reconstruction and UNMACC, whereby UNMACC assisted the Ministry with mine action by conducting surveys and mine clearance operations on roads, where needed.

6. Surveys are again being undertaken systematically: the General Mine Action Survey process (GMAS), which combines general surveys with the neutralization and destruction of explosives has been operational since May 2009 and the General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) process since November 2010. GMASs have been carried out, among other places, in Lubutu, Maniema province; Rungu, Opala, Isengi and Banalia, Orientale province; Dimbelenge, Kasai-Occidental province; and Masisi and Rutshuru, Nord-Kivu province. A GMAA has been completed for part of Kamonia, Kasai-Occidental province, revealing no suspected mined areas, and others are currently under way for Dekese, Kasai-Occidental province; Faradje, Orientale province; Popokabaka, Bandundu province; and Bikoro, Businga, Zongo and Kungu, Equateur province.

7. In view of the many inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the data gathered before the Convention was ratified, UNMACC has cleaned up the Information Management System of Mine Action (IMSMA) database: after an initial evaluation of the database in 2009, which enabled gaps and errors to be identified, UNMACC proceeded with the actual clean-up in 2010, removing information considered inaccurate and eliminating duplication, so as to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the number and location of danger zones and areas suspected of being contaminated with anti-personnel mines.

8. After the database had been cleaned up, the information was classified by province and region and sent to all operators for verification. During this phase, survey teams were also asked to confirm the status of danger zones. At a meeting of all mine clearance operators held in Goma in August 2010, a new list of areas considered dangerous was

drawn up. The number of dangerous mined areas was thus reduced from 822 to 82 (totalling around 14.3 km² and comprising 12 confirmed and 70 suspected danger zones), while the suspect area decreased from 1,060 km² to 14.13 km². Lastly, UNMACC and the national authorities assigned each mine clearance operator (including those involved in cleaning up the database, survey operations and decontamination) a geographical area covered by a regional office of UNMACC: MECHEM is deployed in Kisangani, Goma and Kinshasa; the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Kasai, Equateur and Bas-Congo; and DanChurchAid (DCA) and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) in Katanga.

9. Since 2002, 133 areas (totalling 1,278,999 m²) and 21,396.9 km of roads have been cleared, with 2,592 anti-personnel mines destroyed. According to the UNMACC database, the land release operations performed by all the operators in the country have covered a total of 7,500,000 m². Meanwhile, 2,418 victims of mines and explosive remnants of war have been identified in DRC to date.

10. DRC has introduced a quality assessment service, operating from five regional operations offices, based on international mine action standards for mine clearance operations and for releasing land to communities, which, in addition to issuing accreditation to competent mine clearance organizations, is responsible for certifying cleared land. On the basis of production reports or at the suggestion of operators, the service sends a team into the field to assess the areas cleared when mine clearance operations are nearing completion. Once on the ground, the team assesses the area, in the operator's presence, and completes an assessment form. If the assessment is satisfactory, the work is approved and the operator's obligations are deemed to be fulfilled; if not, the operator is required to return to the area and submit it for another assessment at a later date.

11. With 82 areas still to be cleared and some regions where surveys have yet to be carried out, it seems clear that DRC will not be able to meet its obligations under article 5 of the Convention before the original 10-year deadline expires.

12. Several factors have contributed to the current situation: (a) Lack of data: the incompleteness of the data gathered in surveys carried out before and after 2002 has resulted in serious inaccuracies as regards the nature of the contamination and overestimates of the size of suspected mined areas. The difficulties of data collection stem from the lack of appropriate training in surveying for mines and explosive remnants of war, or from low competence levels among operators in this sphere, but also from poor coordination among the organizations involved, whether in mine clearance or other sectors; (b) Absence of maps: unavailability or non-existence of maps showing where mines are laid: belligerents thought or known to have laid mines did not record locations, and this affects the speed of mine clearance operations; (c) Lack of coordination: there is a patent lack of coordination among the various mine action operators in DRC, with, in particular, poor accreditation procedures and ineffective quality control management; (d) Insecurity: recurrent armed conflict with irregular local armed militias makes progress on the ground difficult and dangerous; (e) Other humanitarian emergencies: the Government of DRC is also responsible for dealing with national security, the return of refugees and humanitarian assistance; (f) Difficult climate and topography: the territory of DRC is huge and complex, with some areas difficult to reach or almost inaccessible because of the poor state of road infrastructure, dense vegetation, hilly terrain and the presence of wild animals. DRC also has a variable climate, with unpredictable rainfall that slows down mine clearance; and (g) Lack of funding.

13. In view of all these factors, DRC is requesting a 26-month interim extension of its deadline (November 2012–January 2014), which would enable it to finalize a realistic assessment of the mine problem with a view to subsequently requesting a final extension, so as to be able to comply fully with the requirements of article 5 of the Convention.

14. During this interim extension, the following activities will be undertaken, depending on the financial resources that can be mobilized by the programme and the operators: (a) further GMAS and GMAA surveys across the whole country with all the operators involved (Handicap International, MSB, DCA, MAG, MECHEM, The Development Initiative (TDI) and possibly Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)); (b) land release operations, including decontamination, by various operators using funds provided by UNMACC or with their own funding; (c) capacity-building for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and deployment of FARDC units in manual mine clearance operations, with support provided by operators such as Handicap International, MAG and NPA, as is already the case in Kasai-Oriental province (Dimbelenge), Kasai-Occidental province and Orientale province (Kisangani); (d) continued capacity-building for the national mine action authority (namely PFNLAM) provided by UNMACC; and (e) implementation of activities set out in the strategic national mine action plan for 2012–2016 by PFNLAM, UNMACC and relevant operators.

15. The annual budget required to ensure that all related activities under all the component parts of the mine action programme are carried out is estimated at US\$ 30 million, of which \$1.5 million will be provided by the DRC Government and the rest (\$28.5 million) will have to come from donors. This estimate will be revised once the quantity and location of mines are known more precisely, after GMAS/GMAA surveys are finalized at the end of 2012. Given that the GMAS process costs \$200,000 per area surveyed, it has also been decided that, in order to reduce costs and speed up the process, GMAA — which costs only \$50,000 — will replace GMAS in certain areas where contamination is considered to be less extensive or less likely.

16. The resource mobilization strategy for the mine action programme in DRC will include building up the process of regular exchange with development partners. A first meeting, co-chaired by UNMACC and PFNLAM, was held in Kinshasa at the end of February 2011, and the parties agreed to organize such meetings every three months. This regular political dialogue will enable the development partners to keep abreast of the programme's strategic directions and of progress made in undertaking surveys and land release operations.
