

**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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Item 12 of the provisional agenda**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 Serbia

1. Mine clearance activities in Serbia started in 2003. The minefield locations in the Republic of Serbia are as follows:

(a) In Šid municipality (near the border with the Republic of Croatia – villages Jamena, Morović and Batrovci), an area measuring 10,000 square metres was suspected of being contaminated by anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. This area was identified through minefield records and maps supplied by The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia People's Army, as well as records and additional information submitted by the Croatian Mine Action Centre and other relevant sources. A subsequent survey established anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were emplaced in an area of 5,906,791 square metres, while about 4,000,000 square metres were cancelled through analysis of minefield records and returned as safe to land users. The clearance and cancellation of these minefields took place during the period of 2003–2009. In total, 44 projects were carried out locating and destroying 5,139 different explosive items (4,003 anti-personnel mines, 840 anti-tank mines and 296 Unexploded Ordnance) from an area of 5,906,791 square metres. The Serbia Mine Action Centre carried out these projects in close cooperation with the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF) and with financial assistance provided by the United States of America, Spain, Germany, Norway, Canada, Czech Republic and the European Union. One of the projects was financed with funds from the public company "Building Directorate of Serbia."

(b) In late 2009, different types of mines were discovered in areas in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo. These mines were planted by the members of the Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (OVPBM) during the conflict in southern Serbia at the end of 2000 and the beginning of 2001. A survey of this area was conducted and identified approximately 3,500,000 square metres of risk and suspected areas in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo. This survey was carried out in accordance with International Mine Action Standards and with the help of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF)

under difficult circumstances including: (a) no maps or mine emplacement records were available; (b) mine contaminated areas contain not only anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, but also other types of improvised explosive devices; (c) mines were not emplaced by following military patterns, and; (d) accessibility to affected areas is dependent on weather conditions. All suspected areas have been marked with signs “STOP - UXO” in both Serbian and Albanian languages.

(c) In 2012, two demining project tasks were finalized. The first demining project task was carried out with funds donated, through the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF), by the government of the United States of America and covered a total of 88,032 square metres in the area of Preševo. This task was completed on 6 November 2012. The second project task, totalling 75,987 square meters in the area of Bujanovac, was funded with a donation, also through the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF), from the Federal Republic of Germany. This task was completed early in December 2012. As of March 2013, the remaining mine risk area totalled 1,221,196 square metres and the remaining mine suspected area (where additional survey is needed) totalled 2,080,000 square metres.

2. The problem related to contamination by anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) in territory under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia can be divided into two different time periods:

(a) The armed conflict that occurred in the territory of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in the border area with the Republic of Croatia, Municipality of Šid, in 1991. Minefields containing anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines were emplaced mostly by The former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia People’s Army.

(b) During the conflict which occurred in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo in the period of 2000-2001, groups of mines of an unknown origin and type were laid by an illegal paramilitary formation, the Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (OVPBM).

3. In addition to contamination by mines, Serbia faces numerous challenges related to the clearance of areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – missiles and other unexploded ordnance. All this ERW contamination is due to the 1999 bombings, explosions and fires in military depots or previous wars.

(a) During the 1999 air strikes against Serbia, cluster bombs were dropped in 16 municipalities. It is believed that in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, cluster munitions still contaminate an area of around 9,000,000 square metres.

(b) It is assumed that since the 1999 bombing, 64 air bombs – missiles, weighing up to 930 kilograms – are located in 44 locations at a depth of up to 20 meters, as well as in the Sava and Danube River.

(c) It is suspected that after the fire and explosions in a military depot in Paraćin on 19 October 2006, an area of approximately 2,500,000 square metres has been contaminated by various types of unexploded ordnance.

(d) In 2006, a survey was conducted in the Djerdap gorge on the Danube River in the vicinity of the border with Romania with resulting in the identification of 23 war vessels, four of which contained anti-ship mines and other unexploded ordnance. These war vessels containing large quantities of anti-ship mines and other explosive ordnance which now pose a threat to people, ships and the environment, were the result – sinking of the flotilla belonging to enemy forces in the Second World War.

4. Serbia keeps track of civilian casualties of the war on the basis of the degree of disability. According to the latest of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social

Affairs, the number of civilians with a disability caused by war is 1,316 of which 921 are men and 395 are women. The Law on the Rights of Civilians Disabled by War, which entered into force in 1996, regulates their rights as follows - disability living allowance; supplement for care and aid by another person; orthopaedic allowance; health care and financial allowance related to health care implementation; free and privileged transport; allowance for food and accommodation during travel and stay in another place upon invitation of relevant authorities; monthly financial allowance and funeral expense payment. All anti-personnel mine victim survivors in the Republic of Serbia are covered by the health care system on different levels: emergency medical care; treatment; physical therapy and rehabilitation and supplying with prosthetic and orthotic aid. Landmine victims are treated in specialized institutions for prosthetic and orthotic rehabilitation.

5. On 29 May 2009, the Republic of Serbia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Also, in the last ten years, the Republic of Serbia has worked on the implementation of a new strategy to improve the position of anti-personnel mines victims as well as persons with disabilities on all levels.

6. The former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction on 18 September 2003 with the Convention entering into force on 1 March 2004. The continuity to the obligations within the Convention in relation to the Republic of Serbia was established in accordance with Article 60 of the Charter of the State Union. Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention. In accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, of the Convention, Serbia has an obligation to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible, but not later than ten years after the entry into force of the Convention (1 March 2014).

7. Having in mind the complexity of humanitarian mine clearance activities, the Government of Serbia established the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC) in 2002. The Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia, as a national coordinating body in charge of humanitarian mine clearance activities in the Republic of Serbia, is responsible for planning and coordinating activities to fulfil national obligations under Article 5. The Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia realizes its activities through cooperation with the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security (ITF) – Ljubljana, and other international bodies, including donor states. All activities in this area are undertaken in accordance with the standards and principles of the United Nations' International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia is not directly involved in demining operations but, among other things, conducts survey of areas suspected to be contaminated with mines, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance (UXO); it develops clearance projects and monitors the implementation of these projects; it conducts quality control of demining activities, and; it issues certificates of completion of demining-clearance operation in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards.

8. The Republic of Serbia regularly submits its reports to the United Nations, and/or replies to questionnaires on national measures for the implementation of the Convention. In accordance with the Decision of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC.DEC/7/04) on supplying of a report on the basis of the Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM) and the Annual Activity Calendar of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Conflict Prevention Centre, the Republic of Serbia regularly submits its reply to the questionnaire on anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war.

9. Serbia also regularly submits its transparency report under Article 7 of the Convention. Reports made in accordance with Article 7, including the reports on the

progress made under Article 5, are presented regularly during the sessions of Standing Committees and Meetings of the State Parties of the Convention. The Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC) provides updated information on the mine situation and activities undertaken by the Republic of Serbia.

10. Serbia fulfilled its Article 4 obligations before its deadline under the Convention. After its accession to the Convention in 2004, the Republic of Serbia destroyed a total of 1,404,819 anti-personnel mines. On 28 January 2005, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro concluded a contract, reference number LU-UM/4500137147, with NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) for the execution of the project for demilitarisation of the total quantities of anti-personnel mines. The organisations in charge of direct execution of the Project were the “TRZ Kragujevac” (Technical Repair Facility in Kragujevac) and the company “PrvaIskra – Namenska” Barič, where “TRZ Kragujevac” disassembled anti-personnel mines, and the “PrvaIskra-Namenska” Barič recycled military explosive by conversion into explosives intended for industrial use.

11. Pursuant to Article 3 (“Exceptions”) of the Ottawa Convention, the Republic of Serbia has retained a small number of anti-personnel mines for the training of the Serbian Armed Forces for their participation in international peace-keeping missions, demonstration of the effect of mines during practice and the testing of protective equipment and training in mined detection. Based on the latest inventory, the Serbian Armed Forces retain a total of 3,149 anti-personnel mines.

12. There have been a number of socioeconomic benefits as a result of the implementation of Article 5. Apart from humanitarian, safety, environmental, social and economic aspects, demining has contributed to the further strengthening of confidence among people, business opportunities in the area and enhancement of relations between Serbia and Croatia.

13. In spite of the effective and visible results achieved on the issue of clearance of minefields under the Convention, the Republic of Serbia is unable to submit a declaration of completion before its 1 March 2014 deadline. An extension of the deadline for addressing remaining mine contaminated areas under the Republic of Serbia’s jurisdiction or control is necessary because of the following reasons:

(a) Groups of mines in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševowere discovered several years after Serbia acceded to the Convention. As mentioned above, mines in those areas were detected in late 2009 and the survey started in 2010. The Republic of Serbia was not in a position to embark upon clearance activities within an appropriate time in order to comply with the deadline established by the Convention.

(b) Part of the territory that needs to be cleared is difficult to access.

(c) Landmine contamination of the above mentioned area is the consequence of non-standardized use of mines undertaken by illegal, paramilitary forces.

(d) Clearance of the mine contaminated areas is more complex than usual, keeping in mind the lack of important information (i.e. mine emplacement records).

(e) Survey and clearance of the affected area depend very much on the weather conditions.

(f) Suspected and risk areas are significant and total approximately 3,300,000 square metres

(g) Up to now, only one third of the area has been defined as a risk area and there are conditions for continuation of demining operations.

(h) Remaining suspected area is being surveyed with the aim of confirming or denying the presence of mines.

14. The Republic of Serbia's achievements regarding the fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 have been significant. Serbia's aim is to fulfil the remaining obligations within a short timeframe. At the same time, Serbia is facing a number of difficulties, and the most important is the lack of adequate financial resources. The unpredictability of securing financial resourcing presents the main obstacle. Furthermore, simultaneously with mine clearance, Serbia has to address areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs/rockets and other unexploded ordnance, since they also block significant resources and development and infrastructural projects. Having in mind all the aspects of this issue, especially inadequate financial resources as well as the remaining area to be cleared and its characteristics, the Republic of Serbia is requesting an extension of its deadline for fulfilling its mine clearance obligations under the Convention for a period of five years (until 1 March 2019). Serbia believes that five years is a realistic period in which Serbia could fulfil its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

15. The work plan has the following milestones:

(a) 2013: Approximately 832,000 square metres will be surveyed and approximately 489,276 square metres cleared.

(b) 2014: Approximately 606,000 square metres will be surveyed and approximately 572,116 square metres cleared.

(c) 2015: Approximately 642,000 square metres will be surveyed and approximately 414,668 square metres cleared

(d) 2016: Clearance of approximately 256,185 square metres.

(e) 2017: Clearance of approximately 247,000 square metres.

(f) 2018: Clearance of approximately 160,000 square metres.

(g) 2019: Clearance of approximately 138,000 square metres

16. The implementation of the survey of the remaining areas will be funded from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, while the clearance will depend on donations and is estimated to cost approximately 2,500,000 euros.