

Comments on Croatia's extension request

17th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty

26 November 2018



Croatia has a good understanding of the extent of the remaining challenge and has the necessary capacity to complete its clearance tasks. The extension request offers a good overview of progress made and it presents a comprehensive and appropriate plan for the extended period. Through additional documentation submitted in June and August this year, Croatia answered, with more or less detail, every single question we had raised at the intersessionals.

Among the positive points:

- The request presents a detailed overview of the progress made so far, a clear picture of the remaining challenge, and annual targets for the extension period.
- It includes the annual costings for survey and clearance, with the expected sources of funding, and it outlines the excellent measures taken to secure funds.
- During the first extended period, Croatia made good progress in reducing the socio-economic impact of mines: there are no hazardous areas remaining near houses or close to vital roads and infrastructure. The plan for the second extended period has been developed according to socio-economic priorities.
- Detailed information is provided about the management, standards and capacity in place to conduct land release.
- Croatia has made a significant contribution of its own funding, some €440 million to date. We commend Croatia's intention to keep providing national funds during the extended period.

Among the clarifications still required:

The plan for the extended period requires a ten-fold increase in land cleared annually by the Croatian Army Engineers. No information seems to be provided on how the Ministry of Defense will tackle this challenge. The extension request projects that 5 km² of military sites will be cleared each year, and does not mention survey. Additional information submitted in August refers to the release of 26km² by non-technical survey at military sites, but does not explain how this relates (or not) to clearance outputs. We hope that further clarity could be provided.

The plan for the extended period also requires a major increase in annual survey outputs compared with the past two years. While about 3km² were released by survey in 2016 and about 7km² were released by survey in 2017, the plan for the coming years establishes that between 14 and 39 km² will be released by survey each year. This is not impossible, because it is the kind of results we found in Croatia between 2009 and 2015. So, in the coming period, it will be useful to receive regular information on adjustments made to capacity and methodology -- to increase efficiency and meet targets. The only such reference in the request at the moment is a small footnote on aerial survey.