



Comments on Serbia's extension request

17th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty

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Serbia's extension request addresses most of the required points and shows that Serbia has a good understanding of the nature of its remaining challenge. Serbia's crucial task, with the support of States Parties, will be to secure funding to finish the job. The remaining contaminated area is quite small, the amount of money required is quite modest: Serbia is among the states that require one last push to finally complete clearance fully. Mines are located in one of the least developed municipalities – they impede cattle breeding, mushroom picking, tobacco production, and other primary sources of income. It is high time to solve this problem once and for all.

Among the positive points of the request:

- Serbia has presented an overview of the progress made during the previous extended period. It has provided a good picture of the extent of the remaining challenge, as well as annual targets and costings for clearance.
- The extension request puts the remaining antipersonnel mine contamination in the context of the remaining overall contamination by explosive remnants of war, including cluster munition remnants. This enables an understanding of Serbia's overall situation and clearance obligations, and an understanding of the total resources required.

We also welcome Serbia's commitment to provide national funding: 36% of the planned budget for the extension period is from national funds, which are to be secured on an annual basis. However, the additional information submitted by Serbia at the end of June this year does not seem to indicate if any of the 1.6 million euros of international funding required for the new extension period has been raised.

The first extension request was assessed by States Parties to lack ambition. This second extension request is for a similar amount of land to be released in a similar amount of time. Serbia has stated its intention to complete clearance before 2023, if funds are available. We call on States Parties to support Serbia in completing its small remaining antipersonnel mine clearance challenge.

At upcoming meetings of States Parties and in Article 7 reports, Serbia should provide updates on specific efforts made and progress achieved in securing international and additional national funds for the extension request period. We also look forward to hearing updates on the process of developing national mine action standards, which should include land release methodologies in line with IMAS.