
**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

**Analysis of the request submitted by Mauritania
for an extension of the deadline for completing the
destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance
with Article 5 of the Convention***

**Submitted by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation
(Austria, Canada, Norway and Zambia)**

1. Mauritania ratified the Convention on 21 July 2000. The Convention entered into force for Mauritania on 1 January 2001. In its initial transparency report submitted on 20 June 2001, Mauritania reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Mauritania was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 January 2011. Mauritania, believing that it would be unable to do so by that date, submitted on 10 April 2010 to the President of the Second Review Conference, a request for an extension of its deadline for 5 years, until 1 January 2016. The Tenth Meeting of the States Parties agreed unanimously to grant the request.

2. On 2 April 2015, Mauritania submitted a request for extension of its 1 January 2016 to the Fourteenth Meeting of the States Parties for a period of 5 years until 1 January 2021. Mauritania highlighted that the need to request an extension was due to the fact that during the final phases of efforts to complete implementation of Article 5, Mauritania suspected that fortifications and minefields in Western Sahara may in fact be located in some instances in Mauritanian territory and that it is difficult to ascertain if this is the case given that there is no natural border and that border markers from the colonial period are unclear, non-existent and/or found at intervals of between 115 kilometres to 175 kilometres. The request further indicates that clarifying this situation is further exacerbated by the complexity of the political context related to Western Saharan conflict. In addition, the request indicates that a resolution to pertinent matters would permit Mauritania to determine if areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines indeed exist within Mauritania along its northern border. The Fourteenth Meeting of the States Parties agreed unanimously to grant the request.

3. In granting the request, the Meeting noted that Mauritania has expressed that the sole circumstance which impedes the ability of Mauritania to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas that it has reported to be under its jurisdiction or control is the fact that a “safety

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device along the border with Western Sahara, composed of fortifications and minefields” may in some instance be located inside Mauritanian territory but that ambiguity concerning the exact location of Mauritania’s northern border makes it difficult to ascertain this fact. In granting the request, the Meeting further noted that Mauritania has indicated that over the extension period it intends to initiate and maintain a dialogue with stakeholders aiming at the acquisition of relevant topographic and cartographic information and if necessary develop a plan to address any identified area within its jurisdiction.

4. On 29 November 2018, at the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties, Mauritania announced that it had fulfilled its obligation under Article 5 of the Convention. Subsequently, in its Article 7 report submitted on 23 June 2020, Mauritania reported the discovery of previously unknown mined areas and, on 26 June 2020, submitted a request for an extended deadline to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation. On 31 July 2020, the Committee on Article 5 Implementation wrote to Mauritania to request additional clarification and information on its request. Mauritania provided additional information on 17 September 2020 to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation in response to the Committee’s questions. Mauritania’s request is for an extended deadline until 31 January 2022.

5. The request indicates that, following the receipt of information transmitted by shepherds, nomads and fishermen and following receipt of accident reports, the National Humanitarian Demining Program for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement (PNDHD)) of Mauritania carried out a non-technical survey identifying 10 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) measuring 4,710,666.248 square metres and 4 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) measuring 3,375,000 square metres of previously unknown mined areas that were identified in the Provinces of Dakhlet, Nouadhibou, Tires-Zemour and Adrar. The request indicated that this information was subsequently confirmed by PNDHD teams and foreign experts. The Committee noted the importance of Mauritania continuing to report in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) by providing information on the remaining challenges, disaggregating by ‘suspected hazardous areas’ and ‘confirmed hazardous areas’ and their relative size, as well as by the type of contamination. The Committee also noted the importance of Mauritania reporting on progress in accordance with the land release methodology employed (i.e. cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, or cleared through clearance).

6. As noted, Mauritania is requesting an extended deadline until 31 January 2022. The request indicates that the objective of the extension request period is to carry out further survey and develop a work plan for addressing contamination. The request indicates that, during the extension period, Mauritania, in collaboration with partners, will carry out survey operations to evaluate contaminated areas and develop an action plan for addressing these areas. The request indicates that the survey will be conducted in collaboration with Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) and that following the definition of the remaining challenge, Mauritania will be in a better position to provide information on the amount of time required to implement Article 5 and submit a final request for extension by 31 March 2021.

7. The Committee noted that, while it is unfortunate that Mauritania has discovered previously unknown mined areas, it is positive that Mauritania has acted in accordance with the decision of the Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties for situations in which a State Party, after its original or extended deadline to implement Article 5 has expired, as an exceptional circumstance, discovers a mined area (as defined by Article 2.5 of the Convention), including a newly mined area, under its jurisdiction or control that is known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines. The Committee noted that it is also positive that Mauritania is requesting only the period of time necessary to gather and assess data on landmine contamination and other relevant information with a view to develop a meaningful forward-looking plan based on this information and then submitting a new request for extension containing plans based on a clearer understanding of the extent of the challenge, and which project with greater certainty the amount of time that will be required to complete Article 5 implementation.

8. The request indicates that since declaring completion, 4 people have been injured by anti-personnel mines (3 men and 1 woman) in the region of Nouadhibou, while other victims may go unreported. The request also notes the efforts made by Mauritania in mine risk

education (MRE) to change the behaviour of the population in affected areas. The request further indicates that a number of MRE campaigns are carried out and that MRE is part of the school curriculum. The Committee noted that Mauritania had provided data on mine victims disaggregated by age and sex in keeping with commitments of the States Parties. The Committee noted that Article 5 implementation during the requested extension period had the potential of making a significant contribution to improving human safety and socio-economic conditions in Mauritania.

9. The request indicates that the total budget for completing implementation will be approximately US \$5,500,000, of which US\$ 3,000,000 is to be provided by the PNDHD. The request further indicates that Mauritania will provide an in-kind contribution in the order of 54% of the cost of the program, including deminers, setting up work equipment, protective equipment for deminers, support vehicles, setting up of regional offices, the provision of victim assistance and logistical support commensurate with the availability and capacity.

10. The request indicates that operations in Mauritania are carried out through non-technical survey, technical survey and clearance. The request indicates that National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) are in line with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) adapted to Mauritanian realities in terms of geography and equipment and that the NMAS were approved in 2007. The Committee noted that, given that the IMAS have had significant updates since 2007, it is important that Mauritania keep national mine action standards up to date in accordance with the latest International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), adapt them to new challenges and employ best practices to ensure efficient and effective implementation.

11. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request information on Mauritania's plan to develop a sustainable national capacity to address previously unknown mined areas following completion in accordance with the Oslo Action Plan, Action #26. Mauritania indicated in its response that the programme will work to develop its expertise and reinforce its competence in order to address any newly discovered mined areas following completion.

12. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request information on the potential impact of the COVID-19 on implementation of the work plan. Mauritania indicated in its response that, at present, the situation has affected the ability of NPA to travel to Mauritania and that some of the activities of the programme have been reduced.

13. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the information provided in the request and subsequently in response to the Committee's questions is comprehensive, complete and clear. The Committee also noted that the plan is ambitious and contingent upon funding, partnerships with international stakeholders and other matters creating an environment conducive for implementation activities, including the impact of the current situation faced with Covid-19.

14. The Committee noted the importance of the request being submitted by Mauritania by 31 March 2021, the importance of developing the request through an inclusive process, taking into consideration the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities, and including the following, amongst other information:

- (a) detailed, costed and multi-year work plans for the extension period, containing information on progress made, an updated list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines using terminology consistent with the IMAS, annual projections of which areas and what area would be dealt with during the remaining period covered by the request and by which organisation, matched to a revised detailed budget based on new funding levels;
- (b) detailed, costed and multi-year plans for context-specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities that are sensitive to gender, age, disability and take the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities into account;
- (c) plans for the establishment of a sustainable national capacity to address previously unknown mined areas, including newly mined areas discovered following completion;

- (d) the humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implications of the extension;
- (e) resource mobilization efforts and external financing received, as well as resources made available by the government of Mauritania to support implementation efforts, including through efforts to facilitate operations of international demining organisations and indigenous capacities, and the results of these efforts.

15. The Committee noted the importance, in addition to Mauritania reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments regarding the implementation of Article 5 during the period covered by the request and other commitments made in the request at intersessional meetings and Meetings of the States Parties, as well as through its Article 7 reports using the Guide to Reporting.
