
**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**

14 September 2020
English
Original: French

Eighteenth Meeting
Geneva, 16–20 November 2020
Item 11 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of applications 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 Senegal

1. For Senegal, mine action is a priority in the efforts to bring peace to Casamance and to rebuild it so that it can play its full role in the country's economic and social development. The Government, concerned for the well-being of the population and mindful of the great damage caused by anti-personnel mines, signed and ratified the Convention in 1998.
2. Following the ceasefire in 2004, Senegal developed an institutional and operational framework for the proper conduct of activities, including the establishment of the Senegal Mine Action Centre, the official coordinating body. However, due to the prevailing low-intensity conflict in the region, the mine action programme was not set up until 2007.
3. The first version of the Senegalese mine action standards was developed during a multi-stage participatory process and released in 2009. In 2013, after four years of implementation, a revised version was issued whereby two new standards (on mechanical and canine mine clearance) and amendments to the standards on accreditation, non-technical surveys and technical surveys were adopted.
4. The delay in implementation and the security situation led the Government to submit a first request for an extension for the period 2009–2016, in which it undertook to:
 - (i) Check the information available on the contamination of the 149 areas identified in 93 localities by the landmine impact survey;
 - (ii) Continue to conduct non-technical surveys in accessible locations;
 - (iii) Demine all 149 suspected areas identified in the landmine impact survey;
 - (iv) Demine all other identified suspected areas.
5. Thus, at the end of the first extension, the situation was as follows:
 - (i) Of the initial 149 suspected hazardous areas, there were 18 left to address (17 confirmed hazardous areas and 1 suspected hazardous area);
 - (ii) There were 26 hazardous areas identified in formerly inaccessible localities (18 confirmed and 8 suspected);



- (iii) There were 2 confirmed hazardous areas in formerly abandoned localities whose inhabitants had returned;
- (iv) Additional non-technical surveys had identified 18 hazardous areas (15 confirmed and 3 suspected).

6. In the context of uncertain peace, the Government decided to open a dialogue with all stakeholders in the Casamance crisis with a view to facilitating the deployment of clearance teams in localities offering the best guarantee of safety and thus enable progress on the basis of prioritization criteria (see annex). In this regard, the action plan of the 2007–2015 national mine action strategy contained the recommendation that demining should begin in the areas closest to the Ziguinchor-Goudomp-Tanaf-Kolda road and proceed in the direction of the Guinea-Bissau border.

7. However, as clearance operations have ventured into areas closer to the bases of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance, demining teams have increasingly become targets in robberies and other acts of violence. The Movement's reluctance to allow the advance of operations can be explained by its belief that its bases might be exposed to units of the national armed forces.

8. Demining was suspended in Kaïlou (commune of Nyassia, department of Ziguinchor) following the kidnapping in May 2013 of 12 deminers from the company Mechem, and again in May 2019 after another abduction – in which equipment was stolen – in Bafata Brame, department of Goudomp, Sédhiou region. This latest incident, which occurred in a sector that according to the available information was supposed to offer a greater guarantee of safety, led to a 10-month halt in demining activities.

9. Senegal has set up a study group on peace in Casamance that is tasked with leading negotiations for lasting peace. These efforts at dialogue, combined with those of other actors, have led to a noticeable drop in the number of robberies and an improvement in security.

10. However, since progress had slowed and the goals established for the extension period could not be met, in 2015 Senegal submitted a second request for an extension and committed to implementing an action plan for the period 2016–2021, covering 216 localities that had yet to be visited, 52 confirmed hazardous areas of known size, and 11 mined areas of unknown size.

11. While it was originally intended that this plan would be implemented by two demining operators equipped with integrated manual, mechanical and canine resources, only one operator (Humanity and Inclusion) maintained its cooperation with the Senegal Mine Action Centre, and it discontinued its trial in the use of dogs after two years.

12. Thus, the progress made during the second extension period (2016–2021) can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Non-technical surveys: 98 of the 216 localities have been visited, of which 5 areas were confirmed hazardous and 93 were cancelled. There are 118 left to be visited.
- (ii) Technical surveys and mine clearance: of the 52 confirmed hazardous areas, 20 have been addressed, including 1 in 2013 by Norwegian People's Aid. There are 32 confirmed hazardous areas remaining. These operations took place in 2016 and 2017 in the six departments of Ziguinchor and Goudomp with funding from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the Department of State of the United States of America and from the Senegalese State budget.

13. As a result of these activities, communities have gained access to an estimated 200,000,000 m² of land which can be used for farming, livestock and tourism. Furthermore, fruit processing units have reopened in Dar Salam; more than 120 homes have been rebuilt in Gouraf with funding from the International Committee of the Red Cross; development projects have been launched in demined localities (Dar Salam, Mpak, Gouraf and Sinedone) in the framework of the national multifunctional platform programme; and support has been provided for 527 families to return to their homes in 29 villages under a programme

implemented by the non-governmental organization Shelter for Life. These outcomes have been achieved thanks to the financial support of bilateral and multilateral cooperation partners, mainly from Europe and the United States.

14. Since April 2014, Senegal has experienced a reduction in operational capacity due to the departure of Norwegian People's Aid, followed in 2016 by that of Mechem due to the lack of funding and of security on the ground. This situation has been mitigated by the fact that the programme can count on a pool of 30 experienced deminers, including four with a level 3 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) qualification and four with a level 2 qualification. In addition, Humanity and Inclusion maintains its operational premises and a staff that can be mobilized if resources become available.

15. Since 2016, four mine risk education projects, funded by the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have been carried out in the departments of Bignona, Ziguinchor, Oussouye and Goudomp. Such activities have contributed significantly to the reduction of mine-related accidents, with only five civilian casualties recorded during the second extension period.

16. The national strategy was updated and validated in 2018 with the participation of members of the National Commission in charge of implementing the Convention and partners including the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development, the French and Spanish cooperation agencies and Humanity and Inclusion.

17. Contributions to the humanitarian demining programme in Senegal are estimated at US\$ 18,916,133, including US\$ 7,222,222 from the State to cover the operating costs of the Senegal Mine Action Centre.

18. The programme faces both a lack of funding and difficulties in gaining access to some suspected areas due to security concerns. The slow pace of the negotiations and the uncertainties arising from that process do not afford the clear visibility over time that would allow operators to plan their field deployments with precision.

19. Since 2015, demining operations have slowed owing to the security problems that have hindered access to suspected areas and to the withdrawal of most donors and some important partners (United Nations Development Programme and Norwegian People's Aid). A further difficulty has arisen in relation to the mobilization of the funds promised by the State for the operational component of mine clearance.

20. In October 2018, a national dialogue was held in Dakar with a view to formulating recommendations to overcome these constraints. Accordingly, a strategy has been devised to gain secure access to suspected hazardous areas and to mobilize the necessary resources for the programme, estimated at US\$ 12,186,185.

21. One of the major constraints of the demining programme is the difficulty of gaining secure access to suspected hazardous areas. The Senegal Mine Action Centre has adopted a new approach by getting involved directly in the negotiations with the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance and has decided, in accordance with the recommendations that emerged from the October 2018 dialogue, to seek the support of persons from civil society and institutions that have made sufficient headway on the issues being negotiated. Furthermore, practice has shown that, while there is a consensus within the Movement to oppose demining activities, the different factions have a degree of autonomy and lack knowledge of what mine clearance entails. As such, it was a question of the Centre taking the opportunity to increase their awareness of demining procedures and the benefits that these have for communities. This bright spot offers the hope that it will be possible to deploy operators to conduct technical surveys and/or mine clearance with a minimum guarantee of safety. Indeed, in February 2020, after 10 months of negotiations, there was a modest resumption of activities, particularly non-technical surveys, in the department of Bignona.

22. Nevertheless, the circumstances require Senegal to submit a third request to extend the deadline by 5 years, until 1 March 2026. The length of the extension sought is based on the difficulty of accessing suspected areas due to the security situation, the sometimes protracted negotiations with factions and the delays in mobilizing resources.

23. The successful implementation of the action plan depends on whether the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance cooperates in allowing access to the target areas – which implies fairly lengthy negotiations to conclude agreements that are often fragile – and on whether financial support is secured.

24. At the operational level, the duration of the requested extension is based on the understanding that two demining operators equipped with integrated manual and mechanical resources will participate in the action plan set out below.

25. For the extension period, Senegal has prepared a workplan that includes the following activities:

- (i) Non-technical surveys: 118 localities to be visited (101 in Bignona, 4 in Oussouye and 13 in Ziguinchor). Planned visits to 40 localities in 2020 and 78 localities in 2021, and to 9 areas whose boundaries need to be defined. Demining of confirmed hazardous areas identified in these non-technical surveys will be scheduled for 2024–2025. The total remaining area is estimated at 1,278,679 m².
- (ii) Technical surveys and demining: 37 confirmed hazardous areas of known size, totalling 491,086 m², plus the areas identified in the non-technical surveys conducted in the 118 localities still to be visited and the 9 areas whose size is unknown.

26. Under the action plan, 12 confirmed hazardous areas totalling 113,975.21 m² will be addressed in 2021, 16 confirmed hazardous areas totalling 299,871.45 m² will be addressed in 2022 and 9 confirmed hazardous areas totalling 77,240.02 m² will be addressed in 2023. In 2024, 9 suspected hazardous areas will be addressed. The total area that remains to be addressed covers 1,769,765 m² (37 confirmed hazardous areas with a total area of 491,086 m² and 118 areas to be visited with an estimated area of 1,278,679 m²).

27. A total of **US\$ 12,186,185** will be required to implement the programme during the extension period, with **US\$ 3,333,333** for institutional support coming from the national budget and **US\$ 8,852,852** that remains to be mobilized.
