



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

30 June – 2 July 2020

The Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to the fulfilment of the Article 5 implementation obligations, as well as to the full implementation of its obligations from the Anti - Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which is shown by the fact that AP mines are no longer produced in Serbia and the stockpiled AP mines have been destroyed.

The Republic of Serbia deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention is 1 March 2023.

As of June 2020, the area in the Republic of Serbia suspected to contain anti-personnel mines totals 1,125,310 square metres. The area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines remains in the Municipality of Bujanovac.

Furthermore, the Republic of Serbia is facing with a problem of newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality.

In October 2019, in the territory of the Municipality of Bujanovac (villages of Veliki Trnovac, Končulj, Lučane, Ravno Bučje, Đorđevac), at the request of representatives of local self-government, the Mine Action Center of the Republic of Serbia conducted survey and marking of locations suspected to be contaminated by groups of mines. These are locations where fires occurred recently, and according to eyewitnesses, explosions could be heard in several places after the fire broke out, indicating the existence of mines in these areas.

Representatives of the Serbian Mine Action Center and Emergency Management Staff of the Municipality of Bujanovac, visited the sites and interviewed local residents, local community representatives, firefighters, as well as police and military representatives.

The mine incident questionnaires have been completed in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

Mine suspected area has been marked in order to clearly and visually warn of mine danger, as well as to ban the entry of population into mine suspected area. Mine

warning signs have been posted in the areas of possible access to mined areas (roads, paths and other areas where movement of people is expected).

Given that the population is multi-ethnic, the wording on the signs has been written in Serbian and Albanian.

The data on the scope of the contamination are not available at the time of writing this update.

In the forthcoming period, Serbian Mine Action Center intends to survey the remaining sites for which there are indications of contamination. The aim is to record all changes that have occurred as a result of new circumstances and are the consequences of new findings. The survey team will, among others, include representatives of Serbian and Albanian local community.

There are a number of circumstances that present challenges for Serbia in complying with its Article 5 deadline. Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

- Unregistered mine contaminated areas (groups of mines): The remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.
- Newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality, in October 2019.
- Climactic conditions: Contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays.
- Contamination other than mines: Specificity and complexity of the problem presents the fact that apart from mines still remaining in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO. All these unexploded ordnance are either remaining as a result of the 1999 bombing, or are caused by an explosion and fire in a military depot, or are remaining from previous wars.

The following methods have been employed and will be employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- Non-technical survey
- Technical survey
- Clearance
- Mechanical demining
- Canine demining

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has allocated 350.000 EUR for demining operations in 2020. However, due to the coronavirus crisis and government measures in the fight against consequences of the crisis, the demining budget will be decreased by 20%.

We will try to match these funds with the available donor funds.

Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) has prepared two demining projects, total area of around 600.000 m², and one technical survey project totalling 390.300 m², which will, hopefully, be implemented in the forthcoming pending on available donor funds.

Serbia will make all their efforts to complete the Article 5 obligations, in order to primarily provide safety of local population, safe exploitation of woods, safe use of road communications, environmental protection, as well as reduction of fire risks.

As regards the actions taken by Serbia in Mine Risk Education and its efforts to ensure that these activities are age-appropriate and gender-sensitive, coherent with applicable national and international standards, tailored to the needs of mine-affected communities and integrated into ongoing mine action activities, namely data gathering, clearance and victim assistance as appropriate, please note that Serbia ensures women and children are consulted during survey and community liaison activities and there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance operations.

In late 2019, the Government of the Republic of Serbia approved funds for the establishment of a Training Centre within SMAC.

SMAC, in cooperation with representatives of the Ministry of Education - Institute for the Advancement of Education, developed the Training Program for Educators (Instructors) for Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Risk Education, which will be verified in the official procedure.

The purpose of the training is to educate trainees (members of local self-governments, civil protection, hunters and construction workers engaged in excavation works in the ERW contaminated areas) in the field of mine action and to enable them to improve knowledge and ability to recognize ERW in the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to SMAC staff, who will be engaged as trainers, experts from the Ministry of Interior will also be engaged, so that different aspects and training modules, among others, the basis of ERW recognition, international mine action standards, medical aspect, etc. will be covered.

Serbia is making efforts to solve the problems related to mines and other explosive remnants of war and the Government, within its modest possibilities, allocates funds for demining operations, but given the extent of the problem of mines and other explosive remnants of war, this is not enough to solve the overall mine problem. Namely, in addition to mine contaminated areas, Serbia has been facing with the presence of the areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other UXO.

Therefore, Serbia needs international funds and time to complete the task at hand. The dynamics of implementation of our demining projects might be affected by provision of funds, that is, if the funds for implementation of our projects are not provided, our plan will be directly affected and more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, if funds are provided, the work plan could be implemented in a shorter period.

Serbia intends to engage itself in regular dialogue with national and international stakeholders on progress, challenges and support for implementation of our obligations under the Convention. In that light, SMAC has established regular contacts with donor countries embassies in Belgrade aimed at increasing the profile level and exploring possible sources of funding.

As a member of the States Parties, the Republic of Serbia is fully committed to comply with all the provisions of the Convention by ensuring the total clearance of all known mined areas in Serbia by 2023.