



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION
19th MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES
UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION**

THE HAGUE, 15 TO 19 NOVEMBER 2021

Dear Mr President,

Distinguished delegates,

We would like first of all to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Netherlands for their skillful presidency of the 19th MSP, as well as to the ISU, the UN Secretariat, and other stakeholders for the excellent work they conducted this year, despite the difficult Covid -19 circumstances.

It's a pleasure and privilege to address the 19th MSP and share the latest developments in Serbia mine action efforts.

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 AP 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.

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

As of November 2021, the area in Serbia suspected to contain anti-personnel mines totals 561,800 square metres and is situated in the Municipality of Bujanovac.

In addition to this area, Serbia is facing with a problem of newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality.

Mine suspected area, including the majority of newly discovered areas, have 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.

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

In the forthcoming period, and predominantly pending on available funds, Serbian Mine Action Centre intends to survey the remaining newly discovered mine suspected areas, for which the indication of contamination has been triggered by forest fires.

Since the Intersessional Meetings held in June 2021, to date, clearance of the area of 298.700 sqm was completed in Bujanovac - one mine and UXO clearance project, with 129 UXOs found and safely destroyed. The project was funded through ITF Enhancing Human Security by the U.S. donation.

Furthermore, SMAC matched the available 2021 national funds (260.000 EUR) through ITF with the available funds of the Republic of Korea and the U.S. for the implementation of one demining project totalling 294.230 sqm in Bujanovac. 6 AP mines and 3 UXO were found and safely destroyed.

Demining of these sites contributed to an increase of safety of local population and provided possibilities for safe exploitation of forest, cattle grazing and picking of mushrooms, which are one of main sources of an income of local population, as well as for the safe and stable electricity supply to residents in Bujanovac. These achievements are, along with creating conditions for increasing safety of locals and transmission line maintenance workers, invaluable for this underdeveloped part of Serbia.

Serbian Government has allocated 260.000 EUR for demining operations in 2022. SMAC has prepared demining projects for the known contaminated areas (561,800 sqm), which will be implemented in 2022, funded by national funds and hopefully matched with available donor funds through ITF.

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 Bujanovac, in October 2019. However, the data on the scope of the contamination of the newly discovered areas are not available at the time of writing this update.

-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 Serbia, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, as well as residual contamination and clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.

Therefore, given the above, we express concern that the Republic of Serbia would not be in a position to fulfill its Article 5 obligations by March 2023, namely we would have to submit the third extension request by latest March 2022.