

Questions concerning the request submitted by Mauritania

Committee on Article 5 Implementation (Belgium, Norway, Sri Lanka, Zambia)

The Committee welcomes Mauritania's commitment to ensure continued compliance with the Convention and its obligations. In this regard, the Committee welcomes Mauritania's submission of its request for extension of its Article 5 deadline. In order for the Committee to fulfil its mandate of preparing an analysis of the request, the Committee would welcome additional information concerning Mauritania's implementation efforts in line with the following questions:

1. The request indicates the presence of 20 confirmed mined areas in three locations, 16 mined areas in Dakhlet Nouadhibou, 2 mined areas in Tris Zemour and 2 mined areas in Adrar. The request further indicates that, "In February/March of 2021 an initial assessment of the areas remaining was conducted jointly by the PNDHD with support from a consultant provided by NPA" (page 5).

In this regard, the request would benefit from Mauritania providing greater clarity on the kind of mined area identified, in a manner consistent with IMAS, disaggregating by 'suspected hazardous area' and 'confirmed hazardous area' and their relative size. The request would further benefit from Mauritania disaggregating, to the extent possible, by type of contamination (Action #22).

Please see below a table that provides the further information that the committee is requesting.

Table 1: Anti-personnel mined area by state (as at June 2021)

State	Location ID	CHA	CHA area (m ²)	Identified mines	Type of contamination	Comment
Adrar	Mayaateg	1	585,700	PT Mi-K	AV mines	Data not available
Adrar	Gunive	1	TBC	PT Mi-K	AV mines	Data not available
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon24	1	839,424	APID51, ACID51	AP and AV mines	Previously known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon55	1	9,147,780	APID51, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Guergara	1	1,203,880	PT Mi-K	AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Lewej 2	1	329,829	APID51, VS50	AP mines	Identified since 2019
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 126	1	132,585	APID51	AP mines	Identified since 2019
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 173	1	3,362,364	Type 72	AV mines	Identified since 2019
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Rbeit l'echar1	1	62,819	PT Mi-K	AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Wettatlechyakh	1	126,578	APID51	AP mines	Data not available
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 1	1	28,794	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 2	1	16,257	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 4	1	14,696	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 6	1	25,565	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 7	1	26,654	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 8	1	66,987	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 3	1	23,638	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 5	1	75,375	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines	Previously Known
Tiris Zemmour	Boukhzame	1	63,796	VS50	AP mines	Identified since 2019
Tiris Zemmour	Guemgoum	1	50,769	APID51	AP mines	Identified since 2019
Totals		20	16,183,490			

AP = anti-personnel AV = anti-vehicle.

2. The request indicates that the presence of mined areas includes, “both the newly identified mine contaminated areas that have been documented in 2019, and areas redefining and considered to be under its jurisdiction or control located on the Nouadibou peninsula” (page 5). The request further indicates that Mauritania will, “Coordinate with relevant authorities to the extent possible on areas that lie outside of Mauritanian jurisdiction but under Mauritanian de facto control”. (page 13).

In this regard, the request would benefit from clear timeline and process on the cooperation of Mauritania with neighbouring countries in addressing mined areas located in border areas.

The government of Mauritania expects that there should be no issue with being able to clear the identified areas on the Nouadibou peninsula. Once the necessary funding is identified then it should be possible to commence with further survey and clearance of these areas. Mauritania has a good working relationship with its neighboring countries and does not expect cooperation to be a barrier to being able to clear these areas.

3. The request indicates that, “Mauritania recognizes that since the last update to the NMAS there have been updates to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). During the extension period, Mauritania intends to carry out an analysis of its NMAS to ensure that they are up to date and fit for purpose to address the remaining challenge” (page 9).

In this regard, the request would benefit from a time-line and process for the review and approval of NMAS, in accordance with the latest IMAS, adapted to new challenges and employ best practices to ensure efficient and effective implementation, including, a formal, well documented and recorded process for identifying mined areas that is supported by an evidence-based assessment for land release (Action #5).

A more concrete timeline for the updating of NMAS has not yet been established. However this point is well noted and will be taken into consideration in the planning process. All relevant and new updates from IMAS will be incorporated into Mauritanian NMAS before any further survey or clearance activities take place.

The request indicates the methodologies to be used to address mined areas, including mine detection dogs (page 13).

In this regard, the request would benefit from further information on the review, development, and approval of NMAS, including standards for the provision of animal detection systems.

NMAS will be updated to include animal systems when there is a concrete plan to bring this portion of the toolbox into the country. Otherwise the focus will remain on using a manual capacity.

4. The request indicates that the maintenance of the national database will be ensured (page 3).

In this regard, the request would further benefit from further information on Mauritania's efforts to maintain a national information management system containing accurate and up-to-date data at the national level on the status of implementation (Action #9).

The IMSMA database has been maintained by PNDHD in coordination with GICHD. This database contains the historical record of all clearance that has been undertaken in Mauritania under the direction of the PNDHD. In the future it will be possible to upgrade and migrate this information to IMSMA Core with the assistance and support of the international community.

5. The request includes a work plan for the period of the extension request including survey and clearance of 20 mined areas measuring 16,183,490 square metres.

The request would benefit from further clarity on the nature of land release operations on these mined areas. For example, Mauritania intends to conduct non-technical survey or only technical survey and clearance.

Mauritania has already identified and confirmed contamination in the 20 areas listed. In these areas only additional technical survey and clearance will be required. However, in a country like Mauritania with many vast unpopulated areas it is still possible that more contamination could be identified in the future.

In an area as large as the deserts of northern Mauritania, with both vast areas and very limited population numbers, it has always been known that in the future additional previously unknown contamination would and might still be found again. A discussion should be had around the idea of to what extent this contamination will be considered as a residual risk issue. Even when the newly identified areas are cleared this time, it is still possible that new currently unknown areas of cluster munition contamination may pop up in the future. Future residual risk will be dealt with by the Corps of Engineers, and the PNDHD will continue to build the capacity of this national body in order to be able to address and further contamination that may surface after completion of these currently identified cluster munitions tasks.

6. The work plan includes a projection of 8 working teams. The work plan further estimates that an initial period of six months in 2021 will be needed to complete the mobilization process, including the identification of funding, staffing, equipment and other resources needed in order to deploy eight mine clearance teams to address the remaining amount of contamination.

In this regard, the request would benefit from greater clarity on the current capacity present in Mauritania, and the required capacity to fill the required 8 teams, including the number of deminers per team.

Staff for these teams can be pulled either from the Mauritanian Corps of Engineers or recruited from the local population. 10 deminers will be provided for each team.

7. The work plan includes an estimated, 'time required for clearance' for each mined area (page 9). The work plan also includes non-technical survey to be carried out on suspected mined areas in the localities of Adrar, Les deux El Hodhs (Egharbi, Echargui) and Le Tagant, (page 13).

The request would benefit from further information on how priorities have been established (Action#20).

The priorities have been established by PNDHD in coordination with representatives from the Mauritanian Government and the Mauritanian Corps of Engineers.

8. The request indicates that Mauritania will undertake, 'context-specific mine risk education campaigns keeping in mind the commitments of the Oslo Action Plan' (page 3). The work plan further includes the following activity, "Awareness campaign on the danger of mines with the involvement of women and girls" for the period 2021, 2023, 2025-2026. (page 15).

In this regard the request would benefit from the inclusion of a detailed, costed, and multi-year plan for context specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities (Action #24).

A detailed multi-year plan for MRE activities has not yet been developed.

9. The request includes a number of capacity building actions for Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement (PNDHD) personnel and further actions to ensure a national sustainable demining capacity, (page 4).

In this regard, the request would benefit from further clarity on the efforts and timeline for the establishment of a sustainable national capacity.

A substantial national capacity already exists in Mauritania, especially within the PNDHD and Corps of Engineers. Of course, it is always possible to build on the existing capacity to improve. Focus will be on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of any operations undertaken by the program in the future.

10. **The request would benefit from information concerning how Mauritania will ensure that activities are carried out taking into consideration women, girls, boys and men's, including in the recruitment of personnel in the establishment of the 8 survey and clearance teams, and the inclusion of best practices in gender and diversity in the review of Mauritania's national mine action standards.**

Gender and diversity are considered to be important cross cutting issues to the programme in Mauritania. The program will seek the inputs of all sectors of the population including men, women, boys and girls when designing and implementing all activities. The program will also seek to achieve gender balanced and diverse survey and BAC teams to the extent this might be possible, while acknowledging that there may be some limitations to achieving gender balance from the staff that would be seconded by the Corps of Engineers