
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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Item 12 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of requests 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 Turkey

1. Anti-personnel landmines in Turkey were laid along the borders and certain areas outside borders from 1955 until 1998. The purpose of the emplacements was to reinforce security of the borders as an additional security measure during the Cold War era. After the 1990s, emplacements were to reinforce military bases in the fight against separatist terror organisations.
2. With the end of the Cold War and changes in security perceptions, efforts towards disarmament, arms control and confidence and security building measures gained importance on a global scale. In this context, the use of anti-personnel landmines was stopped in addition to reductions in conventional arms.
3. In line with the growing international sentiment against anti-personnel landmines, Turkey issued a three-year moratorium on all transfers of anti-personnel mines on 17 January 1996. The moratorium was subsequently extended twice and extended indefinitely on 17 January 2002. On 26 January 1998, the Turkish Armed Forces issued orders to effectively ban the use of anti-personnel mines and to draft a plan to clear areas other than borders, leading to the commencement of mine clearance activities.
4. Following a decision to gain international recognition of Turkey's intent to abolish the use, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, a law on the approval for the ratification of the Ottawa Convention was enacted and later published in the Official Gazette on 15 March 2003. Turkey's instrument of accession was delivered on 25 September 2003 to the United Nations Secretary-General and Turkey assumed its obligations emanating from the Convention as a state party as of 1 March 2004.
5. Since then, Turkey is fully committed to the Convention and striving to fulfil its obligations. In 2011, Turkey declared completion of the destruction of nearly 3 million stockpiled mines, fulfilling the commitment under Article 4 of the Convention. Mine clearance projects have been developed to fulfil the commitment under Article 5 of the Convention. However, satisfactory progress could not be achieved due to developments in the proximity to Turkey. The deadline of 1 March 2014 was extended until 1 March 2022.
6. During the initial extension period progress has been made in many areas including the following:



(a) The Turkish Mine Action Centre (TURMAC) was established in 2015 by Law 6586. Law 6586 was then nullified with the legislative decree 703 on 9 July 2018 after the introduction of the new Presidential System of Government. Article 342 of Presidential Decree No 1, which is almost identical with Law 6586, entered into force on 10 July 2018. TURMAC has made significant efforts and showed progress in improving its capacity since 2015. TURMAC is still in the process of strengthening its internal capacity to ensure full functioning and its sustainability. TURMAC has a central role in mine action policy and implementation. TURMAC is mandated to execute actions aimed at clearing mines and/or unexploded ordnance for humanitarian purposes within the borders of the Republic of Turkey. Its functions, powers and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Formulation and implementation of the national mine action plan,
- Preparation and publishing of national mine clearance standards,
- Initiatives to improve assistance to victims,
- Establishment and operation of a mine action information management system,
- Establishment of a data collection and analysis system, and
- Implementation of the necessary quality management systems to include the accreditation of mine clearance operators.

(b) Following the establishment of TURMAC in 2015, mine clearance operations and the other mine action activities have intensified, and clearance output has increased significantly. Since the previous extension request, a total of 109 mined areas measuring 27 million square metres were addressed with a total of 119.361 anti-personnel mines and 1.729 other explosive items having been identified and destroyed. The total remaining challenge to be addressed in the context of Article 5 obligations in Turkey has been reduced over the period of 2014–2021 from 172 million square metres to 145 million square metres.

(c) National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) including a land release policy were issued in February 2019. A total of 44 National Mine Action Standards and 5 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have been published.

(d) 24 military demining units were accredited by TURMAC in July 2017. In order to increase the rate of clearance, 8 additional military demining teams were established and accredited in 2019. 32 manual demining teams are operational at the moment and the number will be increased to 40 by mid-2021. Military demining teams will be supported by 6 additional demining machines and mine detection dogs.

(e) The Information Management System for Mine Action (V.6.00) was established in 2018. It is fully operational and used by all demining operators in Turkey. All the tools and system components have been purchased and delivered to field operators and TURMAC Headquarters. The system contains all up-to-date minefield and mine victim data and is used for all reporting and documentation, including Geographic Information System (GIS).

(f) Dummy training mines/items are used mostly for demining and military trainings in Turkey. However, a limited number of retained mines are also required to conduct efficient training. TURMAC plans to reduce number of retained mines for training to a total of 3.000.

7. The remaining challenge as of 31 March 2021 includes 3.834 confirmed hazardous areas measuring 145.733.105 square metres.

8. The first-ever “TURMAC Strategic Mine Action Plan for 2020-2025” has been prepared and signed by the TURMAC Director. The five-year plan covers national capacity development, survey and clearance of mined areas and areas containing unexploded ordnance, provision of mine risk education and assistance to mine victims.

9. Based on the previous extension request, Turkey's deadline for implementation of its Article 5 commitments is 1 March 2022. However, after seven (7) years of implementation following the submission and approval of its extension request, Turkey will not be in a position to declare completion of its Article 5 obligations by its deadline.

10. Circumstances which impede the ability of Turkey to destroy all the anti-personnel mines in mined areas are as follows:

(a) As part of its defence policy at the time, Turkey laid anti-personnel mines to reinforce security of its borders with Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria as well as around military installations in its fight against a separatist terrorist organisation. In addition to mines laid by security forces, a separatist terror organisation has also been employing mines including improvised anti-personnel mines (victim-activated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), hence rendering the clearance process more complex.

(b) In addition to topographical challenges particularly in the east and in the south-east region, inconvenient weather conditions also allow mine clearance operations to be conducted only for 5 or 6 months a year.

(c) Persistence of terrorist threat gives rise to security problems for humanitarian demining in certain areas.

(d) Mined territories contaminated with metal remnants (empty shells, ammunitions, shrapnel etc.) due to post operations against terrorism, have a negative impact on land release process regarding daily clearance rate of the de-miners.

(e) Instability along the borders with countries such as Syria, Iraq etc. impedes land release progress and makes it difficult to put in place long-term projects or clearance schedules.

Duration of the proposed extension

11. In order to fulfil its obligations in the context of Article 5, Turkey requests an extension of three (3) years and nine (9) months of implementation and reviewing period, starting from 1 March 2022 until 31 December 2025. The three years and nine months request is in line with the value identified by States Parties in 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 subsequent request containing plans based on a clear understanding of the extent of the challenge and which projects with greater certainty the amount of time that will be required to complete Article 5 implementation.

12. During this three-year period, Turkey plans to:

(a) Carry out Non-Technical Survey of area remaining to be addressed in the context of Article 5;

(b) Continue its clearance efforts; and

(c) Prepare a final request for implementation.

Activities to be undertaken over the course of Initial Extension Period (2022-2025)

13. Turkey will continue Phase-3 of the Eastern Border Mine Clearance Project (EBMCP) with a contracting modality in 2021 along the eastern borders (Ardahan, Kars, Iğdır and Ağrı provinces) with the fund that will be provided in the frame of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)-II (2016):

- 96 minefields (4,242,577 square metres) will be addressed and the entire border line (Ardahan, Kars, Iğdır and Ağrı) provinces on the east except Van province will be free of mines.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) completed tendering process EBMCP Phase 3 in October 2020 and demining and non-technical Survey activities are planned to start in June 2021 for three demining seasons.

- In addition, Turkey has requested fund allocation from the European Union (EU) in order to conduct two (2) demining projects (Van and Hakkari Provinces) within the scope of the IPA-III (2021-2027) programme.

14. In addition to EBMCP Phase-3, the Ministry of National Defence (MoND) will conduct another mine clearance project with a contracting modality between 2021-2023 in Mardin province which is located on the Syrian border. The MoND allocated 3 million Euros for this project, which intends to address 27 mined areas measuring 1,058,000 square metres.

15. 3.834 mined areas will be subjected to non-technical survey (as another task to be conducted within the scope of the EBMCP-Phase 3) to determine the precise perimeter of the mined areas in all mine affected provinces of the country. Turkey will contribute 2.121 million Euros to this activity.

16. Furthermore, mine clearance activities will continue by means of all available military assets as well. A total of 60 mined areas measuring 5,418,669 square metres will be addressed by military demining units. Turkey plans to increase the number of manual demining teams (currently 32) to a total of 40 (32 Land Forces, 8 Gendarmerie) in 2021.

17. Turkey also completed procurement and test of 6 domestic and national demining equipment in 2020 which are planned to be deployed in 2021.

18. Within the scope of the contract signed between the MoND General Directorate of Procurement Services and ASFAT A.Ş. on November 29, 2019, the Mechanical Demining Equipment (MEMATT), which was manufactured for the first time with domestic and national means, was accredited by TURMAC. The Performance, Survivability and Acceptance Tests were completed in Malatya and Kayseri between 13-30 October 2020 in accordance with the CWA (Comité européen de normalisation (CEN) Workshop Agreement) 15044 "Testing and Evaluation of Mine Clearing Machines" document.

19. TURMAC has conducted an analysis through its database and determined all at-risk villages in 15 provinces and 42 districts in terms of mine contamination. TURMAC has prioritized these regions in line of victim data and reflected its results in the preparation of a "National Mine Risk Education Plan" (NMREP), as a part of its National Strategic Mine Action Plan (2020-2025). NMREP has three courses of actions which are aimed to be conducted simultaneously during 2021-2023:

- Non-technical survey (NTS) of all minefields in Turkey will be conducted within the scope of EBMCP Phase-3 between 2021 and 2023. NTS teams will conduct ad-hoc mine risk education (MRE) in the vicinity of these minefields during their survey activities.
- TURMAC plans to encourage local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to initiate MRE activities by organising workshops and trainings. These activities will help develop national capacity through NGOs and will be supported by EBMCP Phase-3.
- An MRE Protocol was signed with the Turkish Gendarmerie in 2020, covering 15 provinces, 42 districts and 899 villages. TURMAC will provide trainer training of Gendarmerie personnel in MRE and monitor their MRE activities during 2021-2023.

20. Mine action is primarily funded by the Government of Turkey. The Government of Turkey has provided the resources and personnel necessary for the operations of TURMAC, military and gendarmerie teams conducting mine action operations, unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearances based on a 'request basis' and provides support to mine victims. In 2020, the Ministry of National Defence approved an annual allocation of additional 53.217.000 Turkish Lira (TL) for the national budget for demining to be used from 2020 until 2025.

21. The humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implications of the initial extension period are:

- A considerable part of the mined areas along the borders consists of arable land, which currently cannot be utilized for both livestock and agricultural activities.

- In addition to preventing injury and death, clearance that has taken place along the borders has allowed for the opening of customs stations, train stations, additional border posts, and access road for military patrols.
 - Especially construction of patrol roads, watch towers, concrete walls etc. as a modern and humanitarian replacement to mined areas continues to support the integrated border management policy of Turkey.
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