



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION**

**INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS**

**UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION**

22-24 June 2021

Distinguished delegates,

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 2021, the area in the Republic of Serbia suspected to contain anti-personnel mines totals 856,030 square metres. The area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines remains in the Municipality of Bujanovac.

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

Mine suspected area, including the 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.

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

In the forthcoming period, and predominantly pending on available funds, Serbian Mine Action Center intends to survey the remaining mine suspected 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.

Since the 18th MSP held in November 2020, to date, clearance of the area of 269.280 sqm was completed in the Municipality of Bujanovac - one project totaling (Končulj Village, Bujanovac Municipality), with 1 antitank mine and 1586 UXO found and safely destroyed.

Serbian Mine Action Centre matched the available 2020 national funds (260.000 EUR) through ITF Enhancing Human Security with the available U.S. funds for the implementation of this project.

Demining of the site 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.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has allocated 260.000 EUR for demining operations in 2021. SMAC has prepared one demining project totalling 294.230 sqm, submitted the project to ITF which matched the Serbian national funds with funds of the Republic of Korea and the U.S.

Contractor for the implementation of demining operations has been selected and the works are expected to begin in the forthcoming period.

In addition, SMAC has also prepared two projects in the Bujanovac Municipality, one mine and UXO clearance project total area of 298.700 sqm, which is funded through ITF by the U.S. donation, contractor has been selected and the works will commence in July, and one technical survey project totalling 390.300 sqm, which will, hopefully, be implemented in the forthcoming period 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.

Nevertheless, 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.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the following achievements:

In the period 21 September – 10 October 2020, SMAC organized, for the first time in the Republic of Serbia, EOD Level 1 training course, which was fully conducted in accordance with IMAS. The training was conducted in the expanded business capacities, i.e. teaching premises with a ground and site for training of deminers within SMAC in a compound 40 km south of Belgrade. The lecturers were IMAS qualified instructors from French demining company "EOD-EX", according to whose plan and program the training was conducted. Among the trainees was one member of the Sector for Emergency Management of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia, as well as representatives of Serbian demining companies and companies from the region.

We expect that in 2021, training courses based on SMAC's training programme for educators for mine and ERW Education, will be implemented. Courses like EOD Level 1 and Level 2 are also expected to be implemented pending on provision of funds.

SMAC's planned training programme for educators for mine and ERW education has been verified in March 2021 by the Serbian Ministry of Education. New Decree on Protection against ERW is about to be adopted by the Government – it was developed by SMAC and Ministry of Interior.

To conclude, Serbia is making efforts to solve the problems related to mines and other explosive remnants of war and the Serbian 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. Given the above, 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.

However, despite all these unfavourable circumstances, as a member of the States Parties, the Republic of Serbia remains fully committed to comply with all the provisions of the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.