

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

COMMITTEE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION (Belgium, Norway, Sri Lanka and Zambia (Chair))

Intersessional Meetings 22 – 24 June 2021

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5 BY SERBIA

I. Progress in implementation (OAP Action #8, #22)

1. Serbia reported that in 2020 it addressed 1 hazardous area measuring 269,280 square metres through clearance resulting in the destruction of 1,587 items of explosive ordnance.
2. The Committee observed that the information provided by Serbia on progress in implementation allowed for comparability with that provided in its 2020 updated work plan. The Committee welcomed Serbia providing disaggregated information on progress in accordance with land release methodology employed, using the Guide to Reporting and in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) (Action #8, Action #22).

II. Clarity regarding remaining challenge (OAP Action #18, #22)

3. The Committee observed that Serbia provided a high degree of clarity¹ on its remaining challenge (Action #18) reporting a remaining challenge, as of 1 April 2021, of 5 suspected hazardous areas (SHA) measuring 856,030 square metres in 3 villages of Bujanovac municipality, 1 SHA in Ravno Bučje village measuring 390,300 square metres, 3 SHA in Končulj village measuring 437,730 square metres and 1 SHA in Dobrosin village measuring 28,000 square metres (Action #22).
4. The Committee observed Serbia reported remaining challenges in a manner consistent with IMAS, disaggregating by 'suspected hazardous areas' and 'confirmed hazardous areas' and their relative size, and type of contamination (Action #22).
5. Action #18 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States that have not yet done so will identify the precise perimeter of mined areas, to the extent possible, and establish evidence based, accurate baselines of contamination based on information collected from all relevant sources, no later than by the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties in 2021. The Committee observed that while Serbia in its 2020 updated work plan submitted to the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties reported having identified additional suspected hazardous areas in Bujanovac municipality where forest fires had occurred, and that survey of these areas forms part of Serbia's efforts to identify the precise perimeter of mined areas, to the extent possible, in an effort to establish an evidence-based, accurate baseline of contamination. **The Committee observed that Serbia was still in the process**

¹ "High degree of clarity" has been used when a State Party has provided a list of all remaining areas (known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines), the estimated size of each area, the status of each area (i.e., "known" or "suspected"), and information on the geographic location of each area.

of identifying the precise perimeter of mined areas and would welcome updated information from Serbia on these efforts (Action #18).

6. Action #18 of the Oslo Plan requests States to report on having established their baseline through inclusive consultations with women, girls, boys and men. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provided updated information in its Article 7 Report on its efforts to establish Serbia's baseline through inclusive consultations with women, girls, boys and men. The Committee would welcome additional information on Serbia's efforts in this regard (Action #18).**

III. National plans for clearance and survey (OAP Actions #1, #2, #3, #6, #19, #20, #26)

7. The Committee recalled that Serbia's updated work plan submitted in 2020 contained a national evidence based and costed plan for clearance and survey which projects addressing 1 mined area in 2021 measuring 294,230 square metres, 1 mined area in 2022 measuring 390,300 square meters, and 2 mined areas in 2023 measuring 171,500 square metres (Action #19, Action #2). Serbia also reported that it prioritises mined areas close to settlements which directly affect local population groups that had ceased cultivation due to the feared presence of mines (Action #20).
8. The Committee noted that Serbia had presented updated adjusted milestones including information on the number of areas and amount of mined area to be addressed annually. The Committee recalled in conclusions presented at the Eighteenth Meeting of the State Parties that Serbia reported its plan to undertake survey of newly discovered areas (Action #20).
9. Action #1 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to Demonstrate high levels of national ownership, including by integrating Convention implementation activities into national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, humanitarian response plans and national strategies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities as appropriate, and by making financial and other commitments to implementation. The Committee recalled in 2020 that Serbia had reported having made commitments to align its policies with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). **The Committee observed Serbia had not provided updated information in its Article 7 Report on its efforts to integrate Convention implementation activities into national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and humanitarian response plans , and would welcome further information in this regard (Action #1).**
10. The Committee observed that in 2020 the Government of Serbia reported an annual allocation of 260,000 EUR towards implementation. Serbia also reported that funding supports the on-going work of the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC), including salaries of the staff, office running costs and survey activities, and follow-up of the implementation of project tasks and conduct of demining quality assurance and quality control (Action #1).
11. Action #6 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to strengthen partnerships and integrate responses between the mine action community and relevant humanitarian, peacebuilding, development and human rights communities, bearing in mind the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provided information on its efforts to strengthen partnerships and integrate responses between mine action related activities and humanitarian response plans, peacebuilding, development or human rights plans, where relevant, and would welcome further information in this regard (Action #6).**
12. Action #3 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to ensure that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men are considered and inform all areas of Convention implementation and mine action programmes, in order to deliver an inclusive approach. Strive to remove barriers to full, equal and gender balanced participation in mine action and in Convention

meetings. The Committee observed that while Serbia reported that there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provided information in its Article 7 Report on its efforts to consider gender and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities in the development of its work plans as well as in ongoing work to achieve completion of its obligations under Article 5, and would welcome further information in this regard (Action #3).**

13. Serbia reported that it signed an agreement with the Ministry of Defence in demining and UXO/ERW removal. Serbia also reported that it had established a training centre with a training programme verified by the Serbian Ministry of Education. Serbia reported that the centre will deliver explosive ordnance disposal training for representatives of Government Ministries and Serbian demining companies (Action #26).

IV. Efficient and expedient implementation (OAP Actions #5, #9, #27)

14. Serbia reported that a new decree including provisions on land release and the development of national standards is to be adopted by the Government. The Committee welcomes Serbia's effort in this regard and encourages Serbia to provide a timeline for approval and on its efforts to ensure that National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) reflect the latest International Mine Action Standards (Action #5).
15. Serbia reported on its efforts to maintain an accurate and up-to-date information management system including the potential installation of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) provided by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (Action #9).
16. Serbia reported on its efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of survey and clearance, including efforts to adopt a new decree and the establishment of SMAC Training Centre (Action #27).

V. Actions in accordance with plans in extension requests and decisions on them

17. In considering Serbia's 2018 extension request, the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties requested Serbia to submit updated information on several matters. The Committee welcomes the information provided by Serbia on;
 - Progress in land release activities relative to the commitments made in Serbia's annual work plan, disaggregated in a manner consistent with the IMAS, including the identification of new mined areas and their impact on annual targets as given in Serbia's work plan;
 - Progress in developing relevant land release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with the IMAS, for the full and expedient implementation of the Convention during the extension request period and their impact on annual targets as given in Serbia's work plan; and
 - Updates regarding resource mobilisation efforts, including in approaching potential donors and in raising awareness of the lack of funding with state authorities, public enterprises and local authorities to fund clearance operations, and the result of these efforts.

VI. Mine risk education and reduction (OAP Actions #28-32)

18. Action #32 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to Report on mine risk education and other risk reduction programmes in Article 7 reports, including the methodologies used, the challenges faced and the results achieved, with information disaggregated by gender and age. The Committee

observed that while Serbia reported on the actions it has taken to effectively exclude the population from areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, including marking by SMAC and conducting mine risk education and reduction programmes (MRE/R). **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provided information in its Article 7 Report on the challenges faced and the results achieved, with information disaggregated by gender and age, and would welcome further information in this regard (Action #32).**

19. Serbia reported that risk education is carried out with affected communities by in coordination with local authorities, school authorities and other relevant state bodies, (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport), as well as with local media means in communities where demining operations are conducted to ensure that affected communities are informed and are evacuated during demining operations. The Committee observed that these activities formed part of Serbia's efforts to integrate MRE/R with wider humanitarian, development, protection and education efforts (Action #28).
20. Action #29 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to Provide context-specific mine risk education and reduction programmes to all affected populations and groups at risk. Ensure that such programmes are developed on the basis of a needs assessment, that they are tailored to the threat encountered by the population, and that they are sensitive to gender, age, disability and take the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities into account. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provided updated information in its Article 7 Report in this regard and would welcome further information (Action #29).**
21. Action #30 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to Prioritise people most at risk by linking mine risk education and reduction programmes and messages directly to an analysis of available casualty and contamination data, an understanding of the affected population's behaviour, risk pattern and coping mechanisms, and, wherever possible, anticipated population movements. The Committee observed that while Serbia reported that MRE/R programmes priorities schools and affected communities located within the area of mine activities. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not provide information in its Article 7 Report on its efforts to link mine risk education and reduction programmes and messages to an analysis of available casualty and contamination data and would welcome further information in this regard (Action #30).**
22. Action #31 of the Oslo Action Plan requests States to Build national capacity to deliver mine risk education and reduction programmes with the ability to adapt to changing needs and contexts, including the delivery of such programmes to affected communities in the case that previously unknown mined areas are discovered. **The Committee observed that Serbia had not reported updated information in its Article 7 Report in this regard and would welcome further information (Action #31).**

VII. Challenges in implementation (OAP Action #8)

23. The Committee observed that Serbia provided quality information on challenges in implementation of its Article 5 obligations, including the impact of newly identified mined areas without registries, climatic conditions reducing access and delays, contamination other than mines, including unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs, rockets and other UXO, and the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation.