



No. 1199-7/2022

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit (ISU), and has the honor to submit additional information and clarifications regarding the request for an Article 5 Implementation extension submitted by the Republic of Serbia.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit  
Geneva

**Replies to Committee on Article 5 Implementation**  
**Questions Concerning the Request Submitted by Serbia**

**Question**

1. The request indicates that Serbia projects that non-technical survey will take up to 1 year and will focus on the areas where fire forests occurred and explosions could be heard but will also include all the other areas in Bujanovac where the existence of other mine indicators might be reported. In this regard, Serbia should apply the States Parties understanding of "the value of States Parties 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 second request containing plans based on a clearer understanding of the extent of the challenge and which project with greater certainty the amount of time that will be required to complete Article 5 implementation. In this regard, the Committee would suggest that Serbia consider submitting a request for an extension for one-year extension (e.g. 1 December 2024). This would also be compatible to Serbia's efforts to complete clearance in Serbia well before 2025 deadline.

**Reply**

**Serbia fully agrees with the Committee on Article 5 Implementation suggestion and on this note, we are submitting a request for an extension till 1 December 2024.**

**This would provide the possibility to complete non-technical survey which will take up to 1 year and will focus on the areas where fire forests occurred and explosions could be heard. By then, Serbia will get a clear picture of the remaining mine contamination and development of a detailed plan containing SHA and CHA will be enabled.**

**Question**

2. The request indicates that during the current extension period a total of 1,792,740 square meters were cleared resulting in the destruction of 61 anti-personnel mines and 2,952 items of explosive ordnance. The request would benefit from providing clarity on concerning progress made during the current extension period by including additional information on Serbia's current policies to undertake land release in accordance with IMAS, by using the full range of land release methodologies to more rapidly release, with a high level of confidence, areas suspected of containing anti-personnel mines, (i.e. cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, or cleared through clearance).

**Reply**

**During the current extension period a total of 1,792,740 square meters were cleared resulting in the destruction of 61 anti-personnel mines and 2,952 items of explosive ordnance through clearance. The main reasons why Serbia's preference is manual demining 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.**

**-Climactic conditions: Most of the remaining suspected mined areas in Serbia are mountainous with challenging terrain and thick vegetation. The fact that**

these areas have not been accessed since the end of the conflict (2000-2001), due to suspicion of mines, means that the land is unmanaged, making it even less accessible.

Given the above, SMAC believes that most of the above areas are not appropriate for the use of machinery or mine detection dogs.

However, the following methods can be employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- Non-technical survey
- Technical survey
- Clearance
- Mechanical demining
- Canine demining

In Serbia, an initial survey which includes collection of data and analysis of available documentation on mine emplacement is employed, as well as a non-technical survey (NTS), which follows after an analysis of previously collected data, conditions in the field, statements by local population, hunters, foresters, people dealing with exploitation of wood, representatives of Civil Protection and Police, amongst others. One significant indicator has been data on accidents that have occurred.

Non – technical survey determines borders of the suspected area, coordinates of the location, type of mines and other UXO, allocation of land, impact on environment.

Technical survey is employed to additionally collect information by technical methods on a suspected area and in case when the data collected by a non – technical survey are not sufficient for suspected areas to be declared hazardous or safe. Technical survey is done by the combination of several methods - manual detection by metal detectors and visually. Manual detection is conducted in inspections. The scheme and dimensions of a inspection depend on land configuration, and all in accordance with the IMAS.

Clearance is conducted in accordance with the IMAS. It is done by a manual method at the depth of 20 cm. Apart from a manual method, demining machines can be used, as well as dogs.

The size of the area to be cleared is determined on the basis of processed data which have been collected by a non-technical survey.

#### Question

3. The request indicated that the land release concept has been introduced in the new Decree on Protection against ERW. The request would benefit from additional information on how the new Decree will support Serbia's efforts to implement its remaining challenge as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The request would further benefit from detailed information on the national system/plans to ensure that information is managed efficiently, particular when it comes to surveying new areas.  
the amendment will incorporate or revise the following additional components:

### **Reply**

**The new Decree, developed by SMAC in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, will support Serbia's efforts to implement its remaining challenge as efficiently and effectively as possible in the following manner:**

- **Introduce land release concept, not defined in the former decree;**
- **Streamline and improve monitoring and evaluation of demining operations;**
- **Introduce the need for development of national standards.**

### **Question**

4. The request indicates that 561, 800 square meters remains to be addressed. However, the remaining challenge does not take into consideration suspected mined areas that have yet to be surveyed by Serbia. The request would benefit from additional information on the estimated size of the areas to be surveyed and an estimation of the area that may be subject to technical survey, and clearance on the basis of previous experience.

### **Question**

5. While the request indicates that Serbia intends to undertake clearance of 561,800 square meters and that newly discovered SHA will be subject to survey during the requesting period, the request does not include information on how land release activities will be conducted. In this regard, the request would benefit from the including of a detailed work plan including plans for recruitment, training, and deployment of survey teams as well as how and what areas have been prioritized for survey and clearance in line with Action 23 of the Oslo Action Plan.

### **Reply 4 and 5**

**SMAC has developed a non-technical survey project comprising the areas have been prioritized for survey and clearance in line with Action 23 of the Oslo Action Plan.**

**The starting areas for non-technical survey are:**

• **Area of 1,777,367 m<sup>2</sup> - in the area of the village Djordjevac, which borders on the north side with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0240/20 and with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0193-4/17.**

• **Area of 156,125 m<sup>2</sup> - between the villages of Veliki Trnovac and Končulj, which on the south side borders with the Project "Turijsko brdo 1" 0134/12, and on the north side with the Project "Končulj – Transmission Line 1 and 2", number 0240/21.**

• **Area of 1,317,575 m<sup>2</sup> - located in the area of the village of Končulj, between the villages Končulj and Dobrosin, which is bordered on the north by the Project "Končulj Singerit" 0209/18.**

• **Area of 830,383 m<sup>2</sup> - located between the villages of Lučane and Dobrosin, which on the north side borders with the Projects "Dobrosin" 0199/18, "Dobrosin 1"**

0245/21, and on the west and east side borders with the Project for Integrated Approach to Mine Risk Land Release 0179/15.

• Area of 286,193 m<sup>2</sup> in the village of Nesalce, located west of the Nesalce village, on the local road to the village of Vrban.

#### Framework of project implementation

Expected project implementation time	Activities / expected results of project implementation	Affected population and survey area
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of contaminated and hazardous areas through survey activities, development of new and updating of existing projects (Technical survey, demining, ERW clearance, permanent marking, education of the population on the ERW risk)</li> <li>• Assessment of the impact of mines and ERW on affected target groups of the population;</li> <li>• Identified suspected/confirmed contaminated area and safe for further use/canceled area;</li> <li>• Identified suspected/confirmed contaminated area marked in Serbian and Albanian;</li> <li>• The size of the area where the survey was conducted;</li> <li>• Interviews with members of affected communities conducted;</li> <li>• Messages of safe and risk behavior with mines and other ERW conveyed to the population;</li> <li>• Based on the collected data, projects were developed for technical survey, demining or ERW clearance by the SMAC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The municipality comprises an area of 461 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• 38,300 inhabitants</li> <li>• 59 villages</li> <li>• 30 local communities</li> <li>• Starting areas for non-technical survey - 4,367,643 m<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>

**Estimated size of the areas to be surveyed and an estimation of the area that may be subject to technical survey, and clearance**

<b>Total NTS area 4,367,643 m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Non -Technical Survey</b>	<b>2,367,643 m<sup>2</sup> cancelled</b>
	<b>Technical survey</b>	<b>1,500,000 m<sup>2</sup> reduced</b>
	<b>Clearance</b>	<b>500,000 m<sup>2</sup> cleared</b>

**Question**

6. The request indicates that clearance operations can only be conducted from December to May (approximately) and that resources often need to be redirected for the clearance of EO which are impeding infrastructure projects. The request would benefit from additional information on how these factors will be mitigated to ensure completion by the requested deadline.

**Reply**

**Request indicates (page 28) that operations cannot be carried out throughout the whole year, but only when weather conditions permit it, namely in accordance with the IMAS, the temperature for demining works to be carried out needs to be over 5C<sup>0</sup>, and in case of Serbia it is the period March – early December.**

**Serbia is putting all its efforts to effectively use this favorable time during the year, but very often the timeline completion depends on the availability of donor funds. Funds that the Government of Serbia allocates for demining operations in Bujanovac are used exclusively for these operations.**

**SMAC, as a national mine action coordinating authority has requested from the Serbian Government to continue to allocate funds in the years to follow. Despite the economic and overall situation, the Serbian Government has taken ownership of the problem, by continuous allocating of funds for demining operations. However, international support is needed in order to solve the overall mine clearance problem.**

**Question**

7. The request indicates that Serbia's implementation will be funded through the national Budget (260,000 EUR) and international donations matched through ITF or other sources of funding (500,000 EUR). The request would benefit from information on the following:

- a. Efforts made to mobilize additional national resources (e.g. armed forces personnel, additional funding) to implement its Article 5 commitment as soon as possible;
- b. Status of international funding and if funding is currently available to initiate the planned survey of newly discovered areas, and;
- c. Efforts to mobilize resource, including donors approached and the result of these efforts.

**Reply:**

- a) **Most of the remaining suspected mined areas in Serbia are mountainous with challenging terrain and thick vegetation. Access roads to these areas are often inaccessible, and prior to the commencement of demining operations, Serbian armed forces using their machines and vehicles (excavators. trucks) improve the quality of access roads by making them clear of obstacles and able to be travelled on.**

- b) **Projects for clearance and technical survey have been developed for known areas (561,800 sqm) and will be carried out in 2022 - funds provided by Serbia and matched through ITF with U.S. and Republic of Korea donations)**

**Non-technical survey project for newly identified SHA has been developed and will be carried out in 2022-2023 – SMAC is in negotiations with ITF and U.S. Embassy to find the donors funds.**

**Funds needed for the period 2022-2025 for land release of the newly identified SHA ~3.040.000 EUR (national funds ~ 1.040.000 EUR and donations through ITF and other available funding sources ~2.000.000 eur are still pending.**

- c) **Regarding funding, in the previous period, Serbia has undertaken concrete steps in order to present its challenges and needs to potential donor countries and other relevant stakeholders. SMAC had many bilateral meetings with representatives of embassies of several donor states in which we presented our main challenges in landmine clearance completion process. Those meetings have resulted in donations which were provided during the current extension period by the US, Japan and Republic of Korea, and led to the implementation of our demining projects.**

**In addition to the continuation of approaching potential donors through series of bilateral meetings with their embassy representatives, SMAC will continue to raise awareness of the funding problem lobbying with state authorities, public enterprises and local authorities to fund clearance from contaminated areas for which they are directly interested.**

#### **Question**

8. Serbia indicated that mine risk education activities will be conducted with survey activities in Bujanovac. 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 as required by Action 24 of the Oslo Action Plan. The plan should highlight, amongst other, who will carry out mine risk education and education (e.g. survey teams) and whether additional financial resources are necessary.

#### **Reply**

**Mine risk education activities will be conducted in Bujanovac schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The target group is the most vulnerable population - children, girls and boys, but also women and men. The mine risk education will be carried out by SMAC and non-technical survey teams. Financial resources are covered by non-technical survey project developed by SMAC.**

#### **Question**

9. The request would benefit from information on national and international capacity to address the remaining challenge, including any plans to mobilize the national armed forces.

**Reply: Please see Reply to Question 7**

**Question**

10. The request would benefit from additional information on how Serbia ensures that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men in affected communities are considered and inform all areas of Convention implementation and mine action programmes, in order to deliver an inclusive approach. The request would further benefit from additional information on how Serbia prioritizes its land release and mine risk education and reduction efforts to ensure the targeting at risk groups.

**Reply**

**Serbia insists on gender equality.**

**During survey and community liaison activities, women, men and children are consulted. In addition, there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance.**

**SMAC is planning to conduct MRE project for the newly discovered mine contaminated areas in Bujanovac, which will be a huge employment opportunity for both women and men.**

**Question**

11. The request indicates that "the productivity per a deminer, depending on mine situation, terrain configuration, land characteristics and vegetation, was up to 150 square meters." The request would benefit from specifying the period of time that this progress is addressing (e.g. per day, per week etc.)

**Reply**

**The specified period of time is per day, i.e. the productivity per a deminer was up to 150 square meters per day.**