



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINE ACTION CENTRE

ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION  
TWENTY FIRST MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES  
UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

20-24 November 2023

Dear Mr President,

Distinguished delegates,

The delegation of the Republic of Serbia would like to use this opportunity to express our pleasure at participating in the work of the 21MSP and to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Germany for their skillful presidency of the 21<sup>st</sup> MSP, as well as to congratulate the Kingdom of Cambodia on assuming the Presidency of the Fifth Review Conference.

We thank the ISU, the UN Secretariat, and other stakeholders for the excellent work they have conducted in preparations for this meeting.

Serbia is strongly committed to the full implementation of its obligations from the AP 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. Furthermore, Serbia remains dedicated to the fulfilment of its Article 5 Implementation obligations.

We thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on Serbia's actions to implement clearance of the mined areas under its jurisdiction.

Serbia deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention is 31 December 2024.

As of November 2023, in Serbia the area suspected to contain groups of anti-personnel mines totals 390,300 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac, plus newly discovered mine suspected areas in this Municipality.

SMAC has developed 3 technical survey projects for the area totalling 390,300 square metres, as well as non-technical survey project for the newly discovered contaminated area in the Bujanovac Municipality, and submitted these projects to ITF Enhancing Human Security and transferred the funds that the Serbian Government allocated for 2023 demining operations in Bujanovac, in order for ITF to match these funds with available donor funds, the US PM/WRA and the Republic of Korea so that these projects can be implemented. Tender procedure for the selection of a contractor for one technical survey project totaling 122,200 sqm has been completed and the contractor selected. Field operations are expected to start soon.

Regarding non technical survey project, for which a contractor has been selected and which was expected to commence, due to certain security concerns, relevant Serbian authorities estimated that the commencement of the field operations should be delayed.

Until this non-survey project is completed, a clear picture of the contamination, and an updated work plan for the remaining mined area is pending.

The clearance poses a unique challenge, which comprises the following:

- Unregistered mine contaminated areas: 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 Bujanovac, in October 2019 and in August 2021. Assessment and survey of these areas have not yet been conducted.
- 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 Serbia, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, as well as residual contamination and clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.

Given the above, the Republic of Serbia expresses strong concerns that it would not be in a position to fulfill its Article 5 obligations by December 31, 2024, namely Serbia would have to submit new extension request by latest March 2024.

On another note, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the following achievements:

Based on the Conclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Defence handed over to the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia former military complex "Velika Moštanica".

This complex is located in Belgrade and consists of 16 buildings on an area of 3 hectares. It is planned that the military complex with classrooms and premises, as well as training grounds within the complex, among other things, will be used for organizing and conducting EOD training in accordance with IMAS standards. Also, the existing buildings and training grounds within the complex provide the opportunity to work on the development and testing of new technologies and innovations in mine action.

SMAC and DRAKON Group have signed the Memorandum of Understanding regarding Cooperation and jointly organize the first EOD 3 + training course, which has been conducted as a result of this formally ratified agreement.

SMAC is continuing its work on implementation of IMSMA Core and establishment of a centralized database aimed at improving data quality, accessibility, and sharing at SMAC and with external stakeholders, as well as bringing informed decisions when it comes to prioritization and planning of activities.

SMAC is also engaged in the development of National standards together with the expert from the Norwegian People's Aid and within the Norwegian People's Aid Project *Enhancing Quality Management Systems of National Mine Action Authorities and Centers in Western Balkans*.

Representatives of SMAC participated at the Third Global Conference on the Assistance to Victims of AP Mines and other EO in a Disability Rights Context, that took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in October 2023, as well as the GICHD Innovation Conference, last week in Geneva, presenting "Integrated Navigation System for Inspection of Minefields" which is based on combination robotics, unmanned aerial vehicle, integrated sensor system which can contribute to organizations improving the efficiency of their operations while minimizing the risk to personnel.

In conclusion, Serbia remains fully committed to the full and effective implementation of its Article 5 obligations, in order to primarily provide safety to all its citizens - women, children, and men, and contributing in the best possible way to the goal we all strive for together – a mine-free world.

**Thank you for your attention.**