

# **Fifth Review Conference 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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**Siem Reap, 25-29 November 2024**

Items 7 and 11 of the provisional agenda

**Presentation of requests submitted under Article 5 and of the analyses of these requests**

**Consideration of submissions of States Parties as provided for in 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 Afghanistan\***

#### **I. Background of Explosive Ordnance contamination in Afghanistan**

1. Afghanistan has been contaminated with Explosive Ordnance (EO) as a result of over four decades of war and continual armed conflicts, starting from 1979 with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the armed conflicts continued despite Russian withdrawal from the country and collapse of their backed government in April 1992, followed by internal war between Mujahidin. The periods of warfare and armed conflicts are described below:

- (a) Russian/Soviet Union invasion (1979-1989);
- (b) Russian backed regime (1989-1991);
- (c) Internal war between Mujahidin (1992-1996);
- (d) Northern alliance against government (1996-September 2001);
- (e) Post 2001 armed conflicts continued up to August 2021.

2. To manage the EO contamination problem in Afghanistan, the mine action programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) was established in 1989 by the United Nations.

#### **II. National Mine Action Authority and Mine Action Structure in Afghanistan**

3. The first deputy prime minister leads the High Commission for Disaster Management (HCDM), which is an inter-ministerial board where mine action and natural disasters are managed. The state ministry for disaster management is Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), and the secretariat for HCDM. The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) is one of the directorates of ANDMA responsible of leading and coordinating the mine action programme in Afghanistan.

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

4. The United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) provides technical support to DMAC and MAPA through the Mine Action Technical Cell (MATC) and technical and programme management support to the MAPA.

### **III. Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

5. Since the signing and ratification of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention by the government of Afghanistan in 2003, Afghanistan remained committed to comply with all related articles of the Convention during the different political eras. To comply with its Article 5 obligations, the national mine action authority in consultation with the MAPA and UNMAS, is seeking a five-year extension of its Article 5 deadline. In this period Afghanistan will make tireless efforts to complete the nationwide survey in order to understand and record the real scope of the EO problem in this country and to clear the remaining known EO contamination including conventional and improvised anti-personnel mine (APM), provided that each single community in Afghanistan is now accessible to be assessed, surveyed and released from the EO contamination by the MAPA.

6. This document explains the nature and extent of the original Article 5 challenge, demonstrates progress made, presents the factors that impeded achieving the previous Article 5 deadlines, explains the impact and implications of the remaining hazards and clearly sets out the plan and budget needed to complete survey and clearance of anti-personnel mine (APM) within a five-year timeframe between April 2025 – March 2030.

### **IV. Factors which impeded Afghanistan from achieving its Article 5 obligations**

7. The following factors impeded the MAPA from achieving its Article 5 obligation during the previous extended deadline (April 2013-March 2023):

(a) Armed conflicts: Continuation of the armed conflicts during the major part of the previous Article 5 extension request (March 2013 – August 2021), resulted in further EO contamination including improvised mines. Armed conflicts also restricted MAPA's access to most of the EO affected communities, especially in remote areas;

(b) Under funding: The programme did not receive the required budget forecasted based on the multi-year work-plan (MYWP) developed as part of the extension request. In addition, survey carried out throughout the timeline of the extension request identified additional EO contaminated areas which were added to the MYWP;

(c) Lack of records of the EO contaminated areas: Due to lack of access and continuation of war, the programme could not provide a comprehensive picture of the EO contamination as part of the previous extension request. A progressive survey continued since then which captured legacy contamination (pre-2001) as well as new contaminations (post-2001) that resulted in additional impediment to the implementation of the MYWP of the previous extension request;

(d) Inadequate mine action capacity: Inadequate and limited mine action capacity (trained staff and required equipment) to address improvised mines (IMs) the clearance of which became a humanitarian priority. However, in later stages of the previous extension request the programme with international support managed to build the capacity to address IM contamination;

(e) Insecurity: Due to active hostilities and insecurity, most of the rural areas were inaccessible during the major part of the previous extension request period. Therefore, mine action teams could not proceed most of those impacted communities;

(f) Presence of anti-vehicle mines (AVM) and explosive remnants of war (ERW) including cluster munitions: Due to the presence of many high priority AVM and ERW contaminated areas, MAPA was unable to focus only on APM clearance. Some of the mine action resources also had to be allocated for addressing the AVM and ERW problems.

## V. MAPA achievements during the previous extension request period

8. As part of the mine and ERW impact free community survey (MEIFCS), the nationwide survey conducted between April 2013 and March 2023 in 19,846 accessible communities located in 208 districts, resulted in the following:

- (a) Survey and recording 4,991 hazards measuring 453.3 square kilometres, that had not been surveyed;
- (b) Cancellation of 1,100 hazards covering 174 square kilometres from the previously surveyed areas;
- (c) Resurveyed 1,667 hazards, resulted in 27 square kilometres decrease in size of the hazards;
- (d) Recorded 1,115 EO civilian victims.

9. Annual plans were developed and a five-year National Mine Action Strategic Plan (NMA SP) was also developed. A dedicated committee has been established consisting of representatives from DMAC departments, UNMAS and implementing partners led by DMAC planning and programme department which reviews and updates the work plan and regularly communicates the changes to all stakeholders.

10. Since April 2013, there were 9 humanitarian mine action organizations and 21 commercial demining companies involved in land release operation in 33 out of 34 provinces of the country. The programme through humanitarian demining, clearance of firing ranges and commercial demining managed to release 2,618.4 square kilometres of hazardous area. Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) Training of Trainers (ToT) was also provided to around 24,000 teachers in the schools, and EORE messages were included in the school curriculum to mainstream EORE and enhance awareness among young children about the risk of EO.

## VI. Quality Management

11. In order to manage the quality of mine action activities throughout the country, MAPA conducted a total of 28,299<sup>1</sup> external quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC) visits that covered 724 mine action projects implemented by the national and international humanitarian and commercial organizations throughout Afghanistan, since April 2013.

12. The programme also developed its capacity in survey and disposal of improvised mines during this period, and 1059 MAPA personnel have been trained in improvised mines survey, clearance and quality management.

13. The socioeconomic impact of mine action has been evaluated, the results shared with all mine action stakeholders and appropriate decisions made during this period. As part of the evaluation of the socio-economic impact, DMAC conducted the mine action livelihood survey to collect data and information about the positive changes in lives and livelihoods of people after the release of their land from EO contamination.

## VII. Civilian casualties

14. Despite all the progress that MAPA has had toward ending the EO threat, unfortunately Afghan civilians suffered the loss/injury of their family members and the damage incurred to their properties. The humanitarian impact in terms of deaths and injuries was considerable. The DMAC database holds records of 42,596 casualties (10,647 Killed and 31,949 injured) due to mines, ERW, improvised mines (IM) and cluster munitions (CM) since 1979, though it is most probable that the number of EO victims will be higher than this due to difficulties in reporting.

<sup>1</sup> All figures have been taken from the information management system for mine action (IMSMA).

## VIII. Remaining known EO contamination

<i>Type of EO</i>	<i># of confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs)</i>	<i>Size of CHAs (Square kilometers)</i>	<i># of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs)</i>	<i>Size of SHAs (Square kilometers)</i>	<i>Total of area known and suspected to contain EO (Square kilometers)</i>
APM, IM	3,103	159.6	66	16.69	176.3
AVM	921	153.1	94	19.3	172.4
ERW	466	165.7	2	0.02	165.7
CM	15	9.28	0	0	9.28
Total	4,505	487.7	162	36	523.76

15. MAPA plans to complete the nationwide village by village survey in the remaining 183 districts within 3 years, starting from April 2025. In addition, 38 firing/training ranges with a total size of 632.1 square kilometres are also subject to resurvey.

## IX. Survey Multi-Year Work Plan

### A. Required Capacity

16. An average of 358 mine action teams<sup>2</sup> are operational within Afghanistan, and the MYWP estimates a requirement for 472 teams, leaving a gap of 114 teams. The estimated budget over a five-year period is US\$255.9 million.

### B. Land Release Prioritization

17. MAPA uses impact indicators with an assigned numeric values from a prioritization matrix (Annex B of the extension request) to classify each hazard. Based on the classification the percentage of hazards in each category are:

- (a) 1-10 Low Impact – 2.24%;
- (b) 11-18 Medium Impact – 52.5%;
- (c) 19-27 High Impact – 42.4%;
- (d) Above 27 Very High Impact – 2.9%.

## X. Assumptions

18. Afghanistan plans to address the EO problem during the requested Article 5 extension period (2025-2030) based on the assumption that the security situations throughout Afghanistan will remain stable and improve. Presently, all the affected communities in very remote areas are accessible from the security point of view. The summary of assumptions:

- (a) Continuation of improved security and sustainable access of mine action teams throughout Afghanistan;
- (b) High possibility of recording new hazards as a result of nationwide survey, which could affect the work plan;
- (c) Adequate financial support and funding throughout the duration of the extension request;
- (d) As a humanitarian mine action programme, the MAPA is seen from a humanitarian perspective, not from the political lens;

<sup>2</sup> Clearance, quick response including survey, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and Victim Assistance (VA).

(e) In addition to international financial support, the programme will receive funds from the national budget.

## **XI. Risk factors**

19. The risks that are likely to be encountered are as follows:

(a) The overall political and economic situation: the plan assumes that the political and economic situations evolve in favour of the mine action programme in Afghanistan;

(b) Security situation in the region: Although the security situation has improved in Afghanistan, recent conflicts in the region including security incidents in neighbouring countries may affect Afghanistan. The security deterioration in the region may be followed by a reduction in international financial support, logistical issues and access to international community, etc;

(c) Funding: unfortunately, the long-lasting war and hostilities have significantly affected the economic infrastructure in Afghanistan, therefore, similar to other sectors, humanitarian mine action also depends on international financial support. Lack or inadequate funding will definitely affect the survey and clearance work plan;

(d) Weather: Afghanistan is a mountainous country and the snowfall and cold winter especially in central highland, north, north-east and parts of eastern (Nuristan) and south-eastern regions affect mine action operations during the winter season. However, the MAPA will consider seasonal deployments in planning mine action operations in different regions;

(e) Terrains and Jungles: Minefields in some parts of south-east, north-east and central highland are located in mountainous areas with jungles (Zazi Aryoub – Paktya province), thick vegetation and sloping areas. These factors are regularly analysed using Identity Management System/Geographic Information System (IMS/GIS) and required preparations will be considered by the programme when planning mine action operations.

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