

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 Türkiye

1. The Turkish Mine Action Centre (TURMAC) was established in 2015 by the Law 6586. Law 6586 was then nullified with the legislative decree 703 on 9 July 2018, following the introduction of the new Presidential System of Government. Article 342 of Presidential Decree No 1, almost identical to Law 6586, entered into force on 10 July 2018. TURMAC has made significant efforts in implementation and has shown progress including by improving and increasing its capacity since 2015. TURMAC plays a central role in the implementation of mine action policy and is mandated to execute actions aimed at clearing mines and/or unexploded ordnance for humanitarian purposes within the borders of the Republic of Türkiye.
2. Following the establishment of the TURMAC in 2015, mine clearance operations and other mine action activities have intensified, and clearance output has increased significantly. At the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties (19MSP) held in Geneva on 15-19 November 2021, Türkiye was granted a three-year-and-nine-month extension of its 1 March 2022 deadline to fulfil its obligations under Article 5 until 31 December 2025.
3. Since the previous extension request, Türkiye completed the Eastern Border Mine Clearance Project (EBMCP) Phase-3, resulting in the clearance of 94 mined areas measuring 3.622.371 square metres and the destruction of 49.336 mines in Ağrı, Ardahan, Iğdır and Kars provinces between 2021-2023. As a result of the project, the provinces of Ardahan and Kars as well as Türkiye's border with Armenia have been cleared of mines.
4. Within the scope of the EBMCP Phase-3, the Non-Technical Survey Project was carried out between 2021 and 2023 to acquire a better understanding of mine contamination in Türkiye and to provide the necessary information for the development of an extension request under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) that meets treaty obligations and is realistic in terms of time and required resources. Türkiye contributed 2.121 million Euros to this activity. Non-Technical Survey (NTS) activities were conducted on 3.451 mined areas. As a result of NTS activities, confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) were reduced and suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) further defined. The new situation was declared in Türkiye's 2024 Annual Article 7 Report. In order to make subsequent decisions regarding the newly identified SHAs and to confirm the presence of mines with certainty, annual technical survey plans for SHAs have been prepared.
5. Türkiye continued its mine clearance activities by using all available military assets. In order to increase the rate of clearance, a total of 18 additional humanitarian military demining teams have been established, four MEMATT2 AS1 mechanical demining machines have been procured and accredited during the previous extension request period. Currently, a total of 50 humanitarian military demining teams (32 teams of Turkish Land Forces Command and 18 teams of General Command of Gendarmerie) are operational. Humanitarian military demining units were augmented with 12 MEMATT2 AS1 mechanical demining machines which were manufactured for the first time with domestic and national means and accredited and certificated by TURMAC. Currently, a total of 14 (12 MEMATT2 AS1, two BOZENA) mechanical demining machines are operational. The capacities of humanitarian military demining units were also increased with the addition of 11 Mine Detection Dogs (MDDs) between 2022 and 2024. Currently, a total of 16 MDDs are operational.

6. In order to increase dog training, accreditation and testing capacity, 228 boxes of accreditation and testing areas were prepared in Iğdır province in 2023 and 104 boxes of accreditation and testing areas were prepared at the Military Veterinary School and Training Center Command in Bursa in 2024. The capacity to train 10 MDDs per year has been reached. Programming efforts are ongoing to increase military demining teams. In this regard, seven additional military humanitarian demining teams (four teams of Turkish Land Forces Command and three teams of General Command of Gendarmerie) will be operational by the end of 2026/2027. Additionally, Türkiye is gradually increasing the budget it allocates to humanitarian demining activities every year.
7. Türkiye's Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) activities aim to reduce the risk of injury from mines by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change among citizens who are settled in close proximity to contaminated areas. These activities include information exchange with at-risk communities, communication of safety messages to target groups, and support for community risk management and participation in mine action. EORE in Türkiye is carried out on a regular basis in a meticulous manner. Since the previous extension request, EORE sessions have been conducted with 9.074 citizens (5.728 men, 677 women and 2.669 children) in total.
8. Türkiye also provides support to various countries within the scope of Article 6 of the Convention concerning "International Cooperation and Assistance":
 - 8.1. A visit was carried out by a Nigerian Delegation to TURMAC between November 2-9, 2024, in order to support the capacity development of the newly established Mine Action Centre within the Nigerian Ministry of Defence. The Cooperation and Assistance Fund (CAF) was used for the first time within the scope of the aforementioned visit.
 - 8.2. Türkiye has assigned a military demining team to carry out humanitarian demining operations in Azerbaijan between 2020-2024. This provided support for Azerbaijan's demining activities.
 - 8.3. Furthermore, TURMAC is willing to provide support for humanitarian demining in areas where the conflict has ended in Ukraine and in areas where stability has been established in Syria.
9. **The Duration of the Proposed Extension:** In the interest of fulfilling its obligations under Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention, Türkiye respectfully requests a five-year extension, with the understanding that this period will commence on December 31, 2025, and conclude on December 31, 2030. This request is made with the utmost consideration for the inherent challenges of demining activities, the complexity of the process, and the timeframe required to achieve the set objectives.
10. Türkiye is demonstrating all reasonable efforts for the completion of mine clearance within the foreseen period. Unfortunately, Türkiye faced a number of circumstances which have impeded its effort to complete implementation of Article 5 including (a) topography and accessibility (e.g. security and instability); (b) weather conditions; (c) excessive vegetation in some mined areas; (d) minerals and metal remnants; (e) density of contamination in some areas; (f) presence of unidentified explosive ordnance used by terrorist groups; (g) Covid-19 pandemic; (h) natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires and floods, and; (i) funding.
11. At present, the remaining challenge in Türkiye includes a total of 2,000 CHAs measuring 93,189,617 square metres, estimated to contain 475,587 anti-personnel mines and 129,307 anti-tank mines, and 1,656 suspected hazardous areas measuring 126,713,843 square metres estimated to contain 93,856 anti-personnel mines, and 32,187 anti-tank mines.

12. Activities to be Undertaken Over the Course of Extension Period (2026-2030): During this period, Türkiye plans to continue mine clearance activities unabated and to complete its work in this area. In particular, the focus will be on the following detailed activities:

- a. **EBMCP Phase-4:** This project, which is planned to take place in Van province, located on Türkiye's eastern border; aims to clear 85 mined areas (approximately 4.000.000 square metres). In addition to demining, the project will organize EORE sessions at 20 different locations, conduct technical inspections at 30 SHAs, and carry out capacity building activities for TURMAC and Military Demining Units. The project is planned to be completed between 2026 and 2028. The mobilization of European Union funds or other international donors to finance the project is ongoing. Estimated cost of the proposed project is more than 20 million Euros. EBMCP Phase-4, has yet to be financed by any donor. Currently, demining activities are conducted by Military Demining Teams.
- b. TURMAC has submitted a project proposal titled 'Strengthening Rural Development and Resilience through Demining in Türkiye' in order to conduct humanitarian demining activities in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Kilis Provinces margining along Syrian Border, to the Presidency of Migration Management to be funded under European Union Facility for Refugees in Türkiye in 2025-2027. The planned components of the project are clearance of 85 mined areas (approximately 4.600.000 square metres), conducting EORE Sessions (25 Locations) including local residents and immigrants, technical survey on two SHA measuring 17.500 square metres, providing Capacity Building Activities for TURMAC and Military Demining Units (16 Modules) and Vocational Training for Local Residents and Migrants. The project is planned to be completed between 2026 and 2029. Negotiations between European Union and Türkiye regarding the proposed project, are ongoing. Estimated cost of the proposed project is above 20 million Euros.
- c. **Military Demining Unit's Mine Clearance Activities:** Mine clearance activities will be carried out by military elements in the regions determined by TURMAC, taking into account the priority criteria and existing capacity. The priority criteria are set considering obligations arising from international agreements, border security, public welfare, benefit to local economy and cultural heritage and areas used for military purposes. Under this plan, various demining activities will be carried out in Bingöl, Hakkari, Hatay, Kilis, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak and Tunceli provinces (approximately 4.000.000 square metres). The demining activities in the regions included in the plan are targeted to be completed between 2026 and 2030. In addition to prioritizing the clearance of mines in border areas, the plan also includes the clearance of mines in the interior and on privately owned land.

13. TURMAC has prioritised its mine clearance activities with regard to the following characteristics of the contaminated land as follows:

- a. **Prioritization Level 1:** Lands with minefields along the southern and eastern borders of Türkiye, which prevent the establishment/construction of the new technological border surveillance system (watchtower, patrol road, etc.).
- b. **Prioritization Level 2:** Interior lands with mine areas that are posing a danger to citizens.

- c. **Prioritization Level 3:** Lands within the scope of mined areas to be cleared in line with projects carried out by other Ministries for public benefit purposes (construction of irrigation channels, construction of customs gates, opening the region to tourism, etc.)
 - d. **Prioritization Level 4:** Lands in dispute along the borders and interior parts of Türkiye belong to private owners.
 - e. **Prioritization Level 5:** Lands within the scope of mined areas to be cleared for the purpose of providing socio-economic contribution (agriculture, livestock, mining, etc.)
14. **Technical Survey and NTS Activities:** Technical Survey (TS) and NTS activities will be conducted to identify and define the border of mined areas. TS activities will be conducted in Gaziantep, Hakkari, Hatay, Iğdır, Kilis, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak and Van provinces (approximately 3.000.000 square meters). NTS activities will be carried out in Mardin and Bingöl provinces (approximately 25.000.000 square metres). The activities outlined in the plan are scheduled to be completed between 2026-2030.
15. **EORE Activities:** EORE activities will be organized for citizens living in areas under mine risk. These trainings will be concentrated especially in Ağrı, Ardahan, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hakkari, Hatay, Kars, Kilis, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak, Tunceli and Van provinces. Trainings will be provided by Gendarmerie General Command EORE training personnel and TURMAC. EORE activities will continue for many years after the completion of demining operations.
16. **Potential Risk Factors and Assumptions:** In order to accomplish the aforementioned work plan for the period of 2026-2030 assumptions are; a) accurate and efficient implementation of the entire "Land Release Process" by all stakeholders of the mine action in Türkiye, b) timely allocated financial resources (Ministry of National Defence Budget and international funds), and c) "stable security situation" along the borders of Türkiye. The work plan will be continuously monitored and revised and the revised work plan will be implemented in coordination with the partners.
17. Potential risk factors which may hinder the implementation of the work plan are:
- a. Continuation of political and security instability on the Syrian and Iraqi border,
 - b. Terrorist (PKK/PYD/YPG/SDG and DEASH etc.) threats to mine clearance and NTS activities and personnel,
 - c. Delays in mine clearance activities by the contractors,
 - d. Adverse weather conditions in some high-altitude regions may shorten demining operations to 3-4 months per year,
 - e. The negative impact of disasters such as earthquakes, fires, landslides, avalanches and floods on mine clearance activities,
 - f. Adverse effects caused by land structure, such as metal pollution, dense vegetation and volcanic rocks,
 - g. Limited budget opportunities and the inadequacy of international funds.
18. This detailed summary provides a clearer picture of Türkiye's commitment to demining, the scope of planned activities and its determination to achieve the targeted results.