Meeting 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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Consideration of requests submitted under Article 5

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Analysis of the request submitted by Serbia for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention

Submitted by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation

(Algeria (Chair), Bulgaria, Burkina Faso and Norway)

Background

1. Serbia acceded to the Convention on 18 September 2003 and the Convention entered into force for Serbia on 1 March 2004. In its initial transparency report submitted on 1 September 2004, Serbia reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Serbia was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 March 2014. Since this time, Serbia submitted requests for extension to the Thirteenth Meeting of the States Parties in 2013, the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties in 2018, the Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties in 2022, and the Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties (5RC) in 2024. The request for extension granted to Serbia by the 5RC was for two years, until 31 December 2026.

2. In granting Serbia's request, the 5RC noted, among other things, that while Serbia had not been able to complete the implementation of the principal commitments made in its previous request to complete implementation of non-technical survey in Bujanovac municipality by its 31 December 2024 deadline, Serbia had made considerable progress and noted Serbia's continued commitment to the implementation of Article 5.

3. On 31 March 2026, Serbia submitted to the Chair of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation a request for extension of its deadline. On 26 June 2026, the Committee wrote to Serbia to request additional clarifications and information on key areas of the request. Serbia provided a response to the Committee's questions on 19 August 2026. The Committee noted with satisfaction that Serbia had submitted the request in accordance with the process established by the States Parties and had engaged in cooperative dialogue with the Committee on matters related to the extension request. Serbia's extension request is for three years, until 31 December 2029.

4. The request indicates that at the time of Serbia's last extension request a remaining challenge of one suspected hazardous area (SHA) measuring 268,100 square metres and five

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SHAs measuring an estimated 4,367,643 square metres remaining to be addressed and pending non-technical survey (NTS).

Progress in implementation

5. The request indicates that during the previous extension period one technical survey (TS) project took place in Đorđevac, ("Ravno Bučji 1 – Bujanovac North") in an area measuring 122,200 square metres and was completed on 28 February 2024 resulting in the destruction of one item of exploded ordnance (EO). This TS project commenced in 2023 but was delayed due to unfavourable weather conditions. The request further indicates that during the previous extension period Serbia completed TS on "Ravno Bučji 2 – Bujanovac North" in an area measuring 122,600 square metres, and in "Ravno Bučji 3 – Bujanovac North" in an area measuring 145,500 square metres, resulting in the destruction of three anti-personnel mines, and one anti-tank mine.

6. The request indicates that during the previous extension period the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) monitored the implementation of the TS project "Sunken German Second World War Fleet from the Danube River near Prahovo" (Negotin, No. 0300/23), with the aim to collect more up-to-date information about sunken vessels. In 2024, project No. 0314/24 was developed by SMAC with the aim to remove 21 sunken vessels and all unexploded ordnance (UXO) up to the depth of 23.22 metres, with four vessels removed (two vessels removed from Danube, two vessels deeply embedded in the Danube riverbed — below the 23.22 metre level) and 5,000 items of UXO identified.

7. The request further indicates that during the period of March 2024 to March 2026, 15 projects covering 416,796.5 square metres were implemented targeting explosive remnants of war (ERW).

8. The request also indicates that during the period March 2024–March 2026, Serbia addressed a total of 584,567 square metres of area contaminated with cluster munitions, identifying and destroying 25 pieces of cluster munitions and 331 pieces of UXOs. The Committee noted that Serbia's efforts to implement Article 5 are only part of the totality of efforts required to address explosive hazards and, as such, noted the importance of Serbia continuing to provide information disaggregated by type of contamination.

9. The request indicates that during the previous extension period Serbia made significant progress to identify the nature and extent of remaining contamination in Bujanovac. The request indicates that contamination is located close to the administrative line, characterised by mines laid by non-state armed groups during the period of 2000-2001, with mined areas located in low density clusters or individual items along former strategic routes rather than in clearly defined or regularly patterned minefields. The request further indicates that it is challenging to identify mined areas due to historical records not providing a complete picture of landmine locations, subsequent removal or relocation of explosive devices, and significant changes in vegetation and terrain.

10. The request indicates that Serbia developed a non-technical survey (NTS) methodology with targeted TS, utilising drone imagery, and geospatial technologies to re-construct historical terrain features and support evidence-based operational planning. The request also indicates that as a result of these methodologies Serbia introduced the "community-council-by-community-council non-technical survey approach" targeting all 30 community councils and 59 communities in the municipality of Bujanovac. The request indicates that Serbia developed a comprehensive set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) specifically for conducting NTS, including survey planning, data collection, community interaction, reporting, and field safety. The request further indicates that Serbia recruited, trained and deployed a multi-ethnic and gender-inclusive team to carry out survey activities. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia making use of the full range of practical methods to release, with a high level of confidence, areas suspected of containing anti-personnel mines and encouraged Serbia to continue seeking improved land release and certification techniques which could lead to Serbia fulfilling its obligations in a shorter time frame.

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11. The request indicates that as of July 2026, declarations for eight community councils, covering 20 villages confirmed no evidence of anti-personnel mine contamination in the areas covered by the declarations. The request also indicates that as of July 2026, NTS conducted with 14 community councils, representing 22 villages, had no reported evidence of contamination. The request further indicates that seven community councils, representing fifteen villages, are suspected to contain mined areas and require further investigation, and that two villages within two community councils remain to be surveyed.

12. The request indicates that during the previous extension period, following the application of updated survey methodologies, Serbia concluded that the available information was not sufficiently reliable to support the delineation of five SHAs measuring an estimated 4,367,643 square metres, and that potential contamination could extend beyond these areas. The request also indicates that during the extension request period 18 active locations requiring further investigation were identified. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia ensuring the application of an evidence-based approach, in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), in the classification of areas as Suspected Hazardous Areas (SHAs) and Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs). The Committee further noted the importance of Serbia providing information on progress made in a manner consistent with IMAS by disaggregating information by the land release methodology employed (i.e. cancelled through non-technical survey (NTS), reduced through technical survey (TS), or addressed through clearance) including information on the type of explosive ordnance (EO) located and destroyed.

13. The request indicates that explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) was integrated with NTS to provide safety information and to identify additional key informants relevant to the survey process, while also supporting dialogue between survey teams and affected communities. The request indicates that, as of July 2026, 16 EORE sessions had been delivered in 11 community councils, with beneficiaries disaggregated by sex and age. The Committee welcomes Serbia providing information on the implementation of mine risk education programmes, including information on how priorities were established, methodologies used, challenges faced, and results achieved and including information disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and other diverse needs and experiences of affected communities.

14. The request indicates that Serbia made a national financial contribution of 780,000 euros during the previous extension period, covering staff salaries and insurance, office running costs, materials, survey and quality assistance activities, with international support providing 750,705 US dollars. The request also indicates that infrastructure projects were funded by relevant Serbian authorities, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, and the Building Directorate of Serbia.

Circumstances which impede the ability of the State Party to destroy all the anti-personnel mines in mined areas

15. The request indicates that the following factors, in Serbia's view, acted as impeding circumstances during Serbia's second extension period: a) the nature of the remaining mine contamination, b) lack of historical documentation and predictable patterns, c) time and resources invested in establishing, training, accrediting, and equipping a dedicated NTS team for the Municipality of Bujanovac, d) the identification of new SHAs in the Municipality of Bujanovac in October 2019 and again in August 2021, e) additional SHAs identified in 2025 as a direct result of the strengthened engagement of the newly established NTS team, f) frequent reports from residents of the presence of other types of explosive remnants of war (ERW), which are often perceived and reported as anti-personnel mines, g) distinction between anti-personnel mines and other ERW is not always clearly understood within the community, requiring additional explanation and verification by the NTS team, h) geographical and climatic conditions have also played a critical role in constraining operations.

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The humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implications of the extension

16. The request indicates that, while there have been no new casualties during the period 2025-2026, anti-personnel mines continue to have humanitarian and socio-economic impacts on communities in the municipality of Bujanovac. The request indicates that anti-personnel mines have an impact on cattle breeding, exploitation of woods, mushroom picking, and tobacco production, and that SHAs in the immediate vicinity of settlements pose a constant threat to the safety of the local population. The request also indicates that contamination impacts roads, communications, as well as the development of the region, including the construction of solar plants, and primary tobacco processing facilities.

17. The request also indicated that clearance of all explosive ordnance contributed, among other things, to a number of construction initiatives such as a gas pipeline route, safe construction of the national stadium, port and supported the expansion of water supply and sewerage lines, roads, railways, and facilities and supporting infrastructure for holding the international specialized exhibition, "EXPO Belgrade 2027". The Committee noted that completion of article 5 implementation during the requested extension period has the potential of making further significant contributions to improving human safety in and the socio-economic development of Serbia.

Remaining Challenge

18. The request indicates a remaining challenge of 18 locations, including three SHA measuring 388,086 square metres and two SHAs of unknown size where technical survey is planned, and 13 potential hazard areas where NTS is currently ongoing.

The duration of the proposed extension and justification

19. As noted, Serbia's request is for a three-year period until 31 December 2029. The request indicates that as of March 2026, in Serbia there is one area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines estimated to measure 268,100 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac and 18 newly identified suspected hazardous areas of currently unknown size exist within the same municipality and will be subject to non-technical survey during the period covered by this request.

20. The request indicates that during the extension period, Serbia projects that it will a) complete non-technical survey, b) analyse all data in order to develop a forward-looking, evidence-based work plan and new technical survey and clearance projects, and c) submit by 31 March 2029 a request, should more time be needed for completing its Article 5 obligations.

Implementation plan and milestones

21. The request contains a detailed, evidence-based, costed, context-specific and multi-year work plan for survey and clearance, including the following objectives:

- Systematic NTS of all remaining community councils within the Municipality of Bujanovac;
- Develop additional targeted TS projects based on evidence collected through NTS;
- Implement TS projects according to operational priorities and available evidence;
- Undertake clearance activities where TS confirms the presence of anti-personnel mines.

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22. The request indicates that as a result, three targeted technical survey projects have been developed; i) Mali Trnovac measuring 131,539 square metres (No. 0336/26), ii) Village of Djordjevac measuring 151,900 square metres (No. 0337/26), and iii) Bali Kamen Area in Veliki Trnovac measuring 104,647 square metres (No. 0338/26).

23. The request also indicates that on the basis of historical experience and the evidence collected to date, Serbia's preliminary planning estimate is that approximately 500,000–750,000 square metres may require further investigation. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia applying an evidence-based approach to the classification of land as suspected hazardous areas or confirmed hazardous areas.

24. The request indicates that demining companies and accredited organizations that are registered and technically equipped according to the Ministry of Interior – Sector for Emergency Management requirements, and coordinated by SMAC, and that as of 2025, 15 organisations (eight from Serbia and seven from Bosnia and Herzegovina) held valid accreditation.

25. The request indicates that tender and contractor selection for clearance projects funded by international donations are carried out by ITF Enhancing Human Security, and that for demining operations funded through other means, contractor selection is conducted by the investor based on projects designed by SMAC, with SMAC maintaining operational oversight, conducting quality assurance and quality control.

26. The request indicates that in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, there are mined areas, as well as areas contaminated with cluster bombs remaining after the armed conflicts. The request indicates that "Pursuant to Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council (Annex II, item 6), it is envisaged that after the withdrawal, an agreed number of the Republic of Serbia personnel, will be allowed to return to perform certain functions, including marking and clearing minefields. As this provision of Annex II has not been implemented, this issue is still within the competence of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in accordance with Resolution 1244".

Budget and requirements for assistance

27. The request indicates that national financial resources of approximately EUR 220,000 annually have been secured by the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the implementation of TS, clearance and other priority mine-action projects for 2026–2028. The request indicates that these funds are to be matched through ITF Enhancing Human Security with international donor contributions. The request indicates that based on the current planning assumptions, an estimated EUR 2 million in international assistance will be required during the requested extension period, and that this estimate will be reviewed and refined as the NTS progresses and additional targeted TS projects are developed.

28. The request indicates that Serbia will continue to implement an active resource mobilisation approach throughout the requested extension period, in close coordination with existing international partners and donors, while also seeking opportunities to broaden its donor base through engagement with other interested partners. The request also indicates that Serbia welcomes international support in the following areas:

(a) Implementation of additional targeted TS projects;

(b) clearance operations;

(c) specialised survey equipment and field assets;

(d) further development of information management capacities, including IMSMA Core;

(e) continued application of drone and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technologies for survey activities; and,

(f) training and capacity development for survey and operational personnel.

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29. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia continuing its efforts to strengthen national level coordination including by ensuring regular dialogue with national and international stakeholders on progress and challenges in implementation and requirements for assistance including by establishing an appropriate National Mine Action Platform, wherever possible.

Mine Risk Education and Risk Reduction

30. The request indicates that Serbia takes environmental aspects into account and minimises potential harm from demining activities, with each demining operator providing an execution plan that includes environmental protection, fire protection, and a health and safety work plan.

31. The request includes a multi-year work plan for EORE for the period of the extension. The work plan indicates that EORE activities are planned and implemented as an integral part of the NTS process. The request indicates that during the extension period Serbia will undertake EORE in all 30 local communities in the municipality, with annual EORE targets to be set and reviewed in line with NTS priorities and the identification of communities requiring engagement.

32. The request indicates that priority is given to communities where there are indications of suspected mine contamination, areas frequently accessed by the local population, locations where hazardous areas may affect livelihoods or infrastructure, and communities identified as particularly vulnerable through the NTS process. The request indicates that EORE is tailored to the specific needs of affected communities and implemented in cooperation with local authorities and existing community structures, with a strong focus on gender and diversity inclusion, with the delivery of targeted risk messages conducted through various materials, such as leaflets, posters, textbooks and public service announcements, and that sessions are conducted bilingually, in Serbian and Albanian, adapted to local customs, occupational practices and land-use patterns. The request further indicates that EORE will be conducted for risk groups, including mobile adult populations, forest workers and children, and that SMAC is coordinating with the Ministry of Education to initiate EORE sessions in primary schools in the Municipality of Bujanovac, to ensure effective implementation under stable conditions.

33. The request also indicates that the effectiveness of EORE will be evaluated through the number and geographic coverage of sessions, beneficiary data disaggregated by sex and age, community feedback, the identification of new key informants or relevant hazard information, evidence that participants understand safe behaviour and reporting procedures, and continued cooperation with local authorities, schools and community representatives. Activity and beneficiary data are recorded in IMSMA Core to support monitoring, analysis and future prioritisation. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia providing annual EORE work plans with a detailed EORE budget.

34. The Committee noted that the request indicates that survey and clearance are prioritised based on clear nationally driven humanitarian and sustainable development criteria with consideration for gender, age, disability, the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities including mine survivors, and the environment. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia continuing to report on its priorities for implementation.

Gender and environment

35. The request indicates that gender and diversity considerations are integrated into NTS implementation, with the survey team including women and men who reflect the ethnic composition of the affected communities, enabling culturally and linguistically appropriate communication, with the survey team composition supporting access to different groups of informants, strengthening community confidence and improving the collection of information from all segments of the population. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia continuing to ensure that gender, age, disability considerations, and the diverse needs

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and experiences of women, girls, boys and men in mine-affected communities including mine survivors, are considered and inform all areas of implementation.

Residual contamination

36. The request indicates that Serbia intends to manage residual contamination through its established national mine action system, building on the existing institutional, operational and financial mechanisms in place with SMAC retaining a central coordinating and oversight role. The request further indicates that Serbia will consider formalising the national residual contamination management framework, including the relevant transition criteria, institutional responsibilities, reporting arrangements, quality-management requirements, long-term financing mechanisms and measures for retaining specialised national capacities and institutional knowledge. The Committee noted the importance of Serbia providing updates regarding existing and new organisational and institutional capacities to respond to residual contamination following completion.

Interim commitment

37. In recalling that the request is dependent on sustainable state budget allocations, international financing and the results of NTS, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Serbia providing, by 30 April 2028, an updated detailed, costed and multi-year work plan for the remaining extension period. The Committee noted that this work plan should contain information on progress made, the result of survey efforts, an updated list of all areas confirmed or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines using terminology consistent with the IMAS and disaggregated by the type of explosive ordnance, annual projections of which areas and what area would be dealt with during the remaining extension period and by which organisation, matched to a detailed budget. The Committee further indicated the importance of the updated work plan containing detailed, costed and multi-year plans for context-specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities.

Annual reporting commitment

38. The Committee noted that the request includes other relevant information that may be of use to the States Parties in assessing and considering the request, including further detail on national mine action coordination and quality management arrangements, the application of innovative survey methodologies and technologies, detailed mapping and status overviews concerning survey results and remaining areas under investigation in the Municipality of Bujanovac.

39. The Committee noted that the information provided in the request and subsequently in responses to the Committee's questions is comprehensive, complete and clear. The Committee further noted that the plan presented by Serbia is workable, lends itself well to monitoring, and states clearly which factors could affect the pace of implementation. The Committee also noted that the plan is based on allocations from State budgets and contingent upon increased international funding. In this regard, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Serbia reporting annually to the States Parties on the following:

(a) progress made relative to the commitments contained in Serbia's work plan and the results of survey and clearance efforts in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) in accordance with the land release methodology employed, (i.e. cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, and cleared through clearance);

(b) impact of survey and clearance outcomes and how additional clarity obtained may change Serbia's assessment of the remaining implementation challenge and timeframe for implementation, including adjusted annual milestones with information on the number of areas and amount of mined area to be addressed annually and how priorities have been established;

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(c) the remaining challenge in a manner consistent with IMAS, by disaggregating by ‘suspect hazardous areas,’ and ‘confirmed hazardous areas’ and their relative size including by disaggregating between the type of contamination to ensure increased clarity on the remaining challenges;

(d) progress in developing relevant land release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with IMAS, for the full and expedient implementation of the Convention during the extension request period;

(e) implementation of mine risk education and reduction efforts in affected communities, including information on how priorities were established, methodologies used, challenges faced, and results achieved and including information disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and other diverse needs and experiences of affected communities;

(f) resource mobilization efforts and external financing received, as well as results of efforts to increase available funding from the government of Serbia to support implementation efforts;

(g) efforts to strengthen national level coordination including by ensuring regular dialogue with national and international stakeholders on progress and challenges in implementation and requirements for assistance including by establishing an appropriate National Mine Action Platform, wherever possible;

(h) efforts to ensure consideration for the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys, and men and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities, as well as climate and environmental considerations in the implementation of the Convention; and,

(i) updates regarding existing and new organisational and institutional capacities to respond to residual contamination following completion.

40. In addition, the Committee noted the importance of Serbia reporting as noted above, of keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments regarding the implementation of Article 5 and other commitments made in the request at Intersessional Meetings, Meetings of the States Parties and Review Conferences as well as through its Article 7 reports using the Guide for Reporting.

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