

**Comments on Colombia’s Article 5 Extension Request, delivered by Mine Action Review**  
**Intersessional Meetings, 30 June – 2 July 2020**

Mine Action Review appreciates that the security situation in Colombia continues to pose a challenge to Article 5 implementation, including access to many mined areas. However, there is still plenty of opportunity for meaningful progress to be made in survey and clearance within Colombia’s requested 4 year and 10-month extension, up to 31 December 2025.

We welcome that in its extension request, Colombia presents a more evidence-based estimate of remaining mined area, that is partially based on non-technical survey. However, there is still significant uncertainty over the actual extent of contamination as a large proportion of the suspected mined area has yet to be surveyed. We would welcome Colombia setting out the timeframe to complete non-technical survey of the 2,843 areas in the 156 municipalities that are currently accessible. In addition, there are a further 166 municipalities with “known unknowns”, based on “events” related to anti-personnel mine-related reports, but where no survey or clearance has taken place yet and which are currently inaccessible due to security issues.

The need for evidence-based survey to confirm mine contamination, before full clearance is conducted, is highlighted by the fact that Colombia reports in its extension request that on average 38% of mined areas cleared had no explosive device found. In Annex 9 of the request, Colombia refers to the development and adoption of a new land release standard in 2020. We would welcome Colombia providing more details of its plans for the new land release standard and in particular, confirmation that the new standard will be in line with international mine action standards (IMAS) and will help reduce the currently unacceptably high level of clearance of mined areas in which no mines are found.

Likewise, Annex 9 also refers to a review of the method of assigning tasks and to the reassignment of tasks. We would welcome Colombia providing more information on this and how the national authority anticipates it will improve efficiency and help ensure that operators are tasked and deployed efficiently with ability to adapt to the changing security environment so they are not standing idle with no tasks to complete. This is especially important in light of the fact that clearance operators in Colombia have frequently been locked into tasks without fully taking into account of capacity and the most efficient deployment of resources.

Annex 9 also makes reference to new external quality management procedures, retraining of personnel, and a new quality management strategy. We welcome these reported measures, as there have been reported issues with the existing quality management process causing unnecessary delays.

Completion within the current requested timeframe, based on existing capacity, is extremely ambitious. The predicted annual clearance targets in Colombia’s extension request are far greater than the annual clearance output Colombia has achieved in recent years. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, significant amounts of land are still due to be surveyed, some of which are not currently accessible due to insecurity.

Thank you.