

**Comments on Tajikistan's Extension Request
Intersessional Meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty
22-24 May 2019**



Tajikistan's second extension request does not give us much confidence that Tajikistan indeed will or even intends to finish clearance by 2025. Since Tajikistan presented its last extension request ten years ago, its suspected area of contamination has increased significantly and it is still unclear what remains to be done. In addition, the current plan excludes clearance of the Tajik-Uzbek border area and the remaining projections are based on the imminent doubling of the existing capacity, for which funding has not been secured. We trust that a revised request can be submitted in the coming months, followed by in-depth planning and urgent action on redoubling the capacity, to clarify intentions and to reinforce the international community's confidence in Tajikistan's clearance program. Indeed, we want nothing less than Tajikistan free of mines by 2025.

Among positive points of the request:

- Seven districts have become mine-free in the course of work under the latest extension request plan
- Tajikistan and Uzbekistan agreed for a joint commission to investigate minefields along the Tajik-Uzbek border and to schedule their clearance
- Tajikistan has taken some steps to increase its demining capacity with the support of the Ministry of Defense and NPA, as well as through engagement with the Treaty's Committee on Cooperation and Assistance
- Tajikistan has a fairly clear plan for areas in the Central Region and the Tajik-Afghan border, disaggregated by the region, type of work, area to be addressed, and year.

Among points of concern that will require further clarification and follow-up:

- Tajikistan's suspected area of contamination has increased from the one provided in the previous extension request without sufficient explanation as to why and how. With this additional area considered as the primary reason for not fulfilling the commitment under the first extension request, Tajikistan should provide clearer explanations in this regard
- Tajikistan still does not know exactly what remains to be done with thirty areas remaining to be surveyed. Tajikistan recognizes that its survey capacity is insufficient but there are no plans to significantly expand survey capacity for the early period of the extension period. Tajikistan needs to do all it can to ensure the survey is completed as soon as possible!

- The extension request excludes the Tajik-Uzbek border and does not contain a plan to address this area. This is indeed at odds with the decision on forming the joint border commission. Tajikistan needs to revise its request by including a plan also for the Tajik-Uzbek border area and continue working closely on securing timely survey and clearance of the border area with Uzbekistan to be completed by 2025
- The annual projections in Tajikistan's extension request are simplistic, and the total cost and budget needed for implementation of the workplan is unclear and includes a number of discrepancies. Tajikistan should establish more accurate projections and timelines and clarify cost discrepancies
- The requested deadline of December 2025 to complete clearance is extremely optimistic. It is based on doubling the current capacity, funding for which has not yet been secured, whereas the presented plan assumes that the increased capacity will be fully operational from 2020. Without the doubling of capacity it seems unlikely Tajikistan will meet the 2025 deadline. Tajikistan needs to provide more information in the extension request on its resource mobilization efforts and take immediate steps to secure international funding required to fulfill its obligations under art. 5
- Tajikistan should commit to provide regular updates to States Parties on its proposed workplan, adjusting it according to the actual survey and clearance output achieved, and available capacity, and to more accurately reflect the extent of remaining contamination
- Lastly, the inconsistent use of terminology and means of quantification of the problem (interchangeable use of district-province-area without specifying whether it is SHA, CHA or 'area' in a more general sense) adds to further lack of clarity and to obscuring the actual results of the work on the land release. The Tajikistan National Mine Action Center should aim to improve its land release terminology and methodology, to make it more consistent with IMAS.