



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE APLC**

**UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION**

Geneva, 27-31 May 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia I would like to thank the organizers for convening the AP Landmine Convention Intersessionals and for giving us the opportunity to participate in the meetings and present the relevant information regarding actual status of fulfilment of obligations of the Republic of Serbia under the Article 5 of the Convention. At the outset, we would like to thank the ISU for providing us with technical support in preparation of our Extension request. Our thanks go to the Co-chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Article 5 Analyzing Group and last, but not the least ICBL for sharing their views on our submitted request and enabling us to provide additional clarifications to ensure that it is clearly interpreted.

The Republic of Serbia is a State Party of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction since 2004 and is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention. The stockpiles of AP mines the Republic of Serbia destroyed in year 2007, before the deadline established under Article 5.

In accordance with Article 5, Paragraph 1 of the Convention, Serbia is obliged to destroy or ensure destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than 10 years after the entry into force of this Convention.

The Republic of Serbia fulfils its obligations related to clearance of mine contaminated area. The dynamics of demining is affected by lack of funds, as well as by the fact that the remaining mine contaminated area is in a heavily accessible terrain where demining cannot be done throughout the whole year, but only when weather conditions are favourable. Having in mind that 2014 is Serbia's deadline to fulfil its Article 5 obligations, we estimate that Serbia might face a situation that it may not destroy or ensure the destruction of all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 March 2014, namely by the deadline for fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations under the Convention. Therefore, on 27 March 2013, the Republic of Serbia submitted a Request for extension of the deadline for fulfilment of obligations under Article 5 of the Convention for a 5 year period.

Within its original ten year deadline Serbia managed to complete clearance of minefields in the border area with Croatia. The last mines in that area were removed on 10 November 2009, which apart from safety, ecological and economic aspects contributed to further strengthening of confidence between people and enhancement of relations between Serbia and Croatia.

After completing clearance of the above mentioned mine contaminated area, the Republic of Serbia planned to submit a Declaration of Completion of implementation of Article 5 of the Convention. However, in late 2009, it was subsequently established that in the south of the country there were groups of AP and AT mines of an unknown origin and type. These mines were emplaced by the members of the paramilitary formation of so called "Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa" during conflict situations in that area in late 2000 and early 2001.

As of May 2013, mine risk area in Bujanovac and Preševo totals 1.221.196 square meters. The SMAC has developed projects for this area and is lobbying for provision of funds for their implementation. The remaining mine suspected area in Bujanovac and Preševo totalling around 2.000.000 square meters will be subject to further survey in order to confirm or reject suspicions of mine contamination.

By the first half of 2015, the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) will, in cooperation with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), endeavour to complete a survey of the remaining mine suspected areas measuring around 2,000,000 square meters in the Municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo giving priority to surveying the areas which directly affect the most vulnerable population.

The survey will face a number of challenges including primarily:

- Lack of mine emplacement records
- Difficult accessible terrain
- Weather conditions limiting the timeframe which allows for survey operations to take place.

Simultaneously with a survey of mine suspected areas, demining will be conducted for the projects already developed by the SMAC - for currently mine risk area of 1,221,196 sqm, as well as for the projects which will be developed for mine risk areas resulting from the survey of remaining mine suspected areas, in the Municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo.

Demining operations will follow upon securing of funding from donors or other sources of funding.

In order to clarify once more the issue related to the time schedule presented in our request, this is the worst case scenario since the dynamics of implementation of our demining projects is directly affected by provision of funds. If more funds are provided, demining could be completed in a shorter period of time.

At the same time, Serbia has to deal with clearance of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, since they also affect population and block substantial resources and hinder implementation of development and infrastructure projects.

Starting from the fact that due to difficult economic situation, demining/clearance operations in Serbia have been funded mostly from international donations, and given that there is an evident trend of a reduction of financial participation of international donors for demining/clearance operations in the South East European countries, including Serbia, and in a situation when some donors are exclusively interested in funding cluster munitions clearance, we believe that a 5 year period is a realistic period in which Serbia could fulfil its obligations, that is Serbia could be cleared of mines by 2019.

We remain committed to provide additional information that may arise up to the 13 MSP when the final decision on our request is to be made.

Thank you for your attention.