

ICBL Comments on Extension Requests - Mauritania  
10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States Parties of the Mine Ban Treaty  
29 November 2010



Mauritania's progress in identifying and clearing all mined areas under its jurisdiction and control has been disappointingly slow, especially in its first six years, which is a reflection of the low level of government support for the demining efforts, as well a reflection of the small amount of international assistance Mauritania has received to date. Other reasons include a reliance on manual demining techniques in early years and difficult physical conditions. The extension request takes note of this slow progress, as well as some of the steps taken to increase the pace in recent years, including through an explicit land release process and the shift of the mine action center from military to civilian control. But much more support from the government, as well as assistance from the international community, will be needed if the demining program is to achieve the goals laid out in the request. Mauritania's plans to provide 10% of the clearance costs is a good sign of such commitment.

Looking ahead, the request puts forward an ambitious plan for 2011 through 2015, which is another positive sign of Mauritania's commitment to achieving its Article 5 obligations in a more timely manner. The mine action plan put forward in the extension request is, however, rather vague, and leads to a number of questions, which can be found in the ICBL comments on we distributed. Overall, we think more information should be provided on plans for land release in the extension period since the predicted amount of land to be released is much higher than in previous years, whereas there is no predicted funding needed for land release after 2012 and small budgets for 2010 and 2011. It would also be useful to know more about plans for mechanical demining, including how the machines could be repaired in isolated desert conditions.

To be achievable, the demining plan will need to be matched with appropriate land release processes and sufficient international cooperation and assistance. It is notable that Mauritania's contribution to mine clearance from 2001 to 2009 was almost twice as much as the international assistance it received, a ratio that will need to shift considerably if it is to succeed in its post-2010 plan. A vague plan is put forward in the request about how such resources will be found. Mauritania should provide much more information on how it expects to raise the necessary funds, including plans to demonstrate to donors that mine action is a high priority for economic and humanitarian reasons.

In sum, the ICBL finds that with sufficient international support, Mauritania should be able to finish clearing all known mined areas in five years or less. The ICBL therefore recommends that Mauritania be granted a five-year extension and calls on all states in a position to do so to provide higher levels of financial, material and technical assistance.