

Comments and Expectations Mine Clearance Deadline Extension Request



13th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
December 2013

SERBIA

Extension requested: until 1 March 2019 (5 years)

Key comments on the request:

- Since the discovery of additional mined areas in 2009, Serbia has made slow progress in surveying and clearing these areas.
- Serbia's plan for the extension period is clear, but does not reflect the need for urgent action required both by the treaty and by the danger the mines pose to the local population.
- Serbia should be in a position to fund much more of the remaining work, enabling it to finish clearance in a shorter period of time than requested.

Expectations for the extension period:

The work plan lays out clearly the amount of land expected to be surveyed and cleared in each year. At the same time, it projects a sharp decrease in activity after 2015, with clearance levels reduced by 50% or more just when the completion of overall survey work would seemingly free up resources for faster clearance. If productivity were kept at consistent levels, it seems Serbia could finish at least two years earlier. The request repeatedly states that the remaining mined areas pose a "constant threat to the safety of the local population" as they lie near residential areas, schoolyards, and areas where people carry out daily activities, and otherwise impede economic opportunities in this notably poor area of Serbia. For all these reasons, *Serbia should review the plan and its working methods with a view to shortening the projected timeline.*

At the same time, Serbia notes that it expects the plans presented in the request "will most likely change."¹ *Serbia should report clearly to States Parties at intersessional meetings and Meetings of States Parties of any changes in plans, and should ensure that changes in plans do not result in the request of another extension.*

The requests also reports that there is no systematic and centrally kept database on mine accidents and mine victims. *Serbia should establish a database on landmine and other UXO casualties and ensure the local population is well informed of the landmine threat.*

Serbia expects international donors to fund the entirety of its mine and cluster munitions clearance and says it will only contribute €150,000 a year to fund survey and SMAC's management. But Serbia should be in a position to meet more, if not all, of its projected modest clearance costs (€2.5 million). Given the impact on the population and the treaty requirement to complete Article 5 "as soon as possible," *Serbia should increase its projected budget to enable completion with a shorter period of time. Serbia should meet all gaps in international funding by providing increased national funds.*

¹ Serbia's Article 5 Extension Request, p. 27.