
**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,
Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel
Mines and on Their Destruction**

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Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of requests submitted under Article 5

**Request for extension of the deadline for completing the
destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with
article 5 of the Convention**
Executive summary

Submitted by Turkey*

History

1. Anti-personnel landmines were laid along the borders and certain areas outside borders until from 1955 till 1998. The purpose of the emplacements was to reinforce security of the borders and military bases in fight against separatist terror organization and also as an additional security measure during the cold war era.
2. With the end of the cold war and changes in security perceptions, efforts towards disarmament, arms control and confidence and security building measures gained importance on a global scale. In this context, the use of anti-personnel land mines was stopped in addition to reductions in conventional arms.
3. In line with the growing international sentiment against anti-personnel landmines, Turkey issued a three-year moratorium on all transfers of anti-personnel landmines on 17 January 1996. The moratorium was subsequently extended twice, and on 17 January 2002 extended indefinitely. On 26 January 1998, the Turkish Armed Forces was issued orders to effectively ban the use of anti-personnel landmines and to draft a plan to clear areas other than borders of mines, leading to the commencement of mine clearance activities.
4. Following a decision to win international recognition to Turkey's intent to abolish the use, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, a law on the approval for the ratification of the Ottawa Convention was enacted and later published in the Official Gazette on 15 March 2003. Approval for accession to the Convention was delivered on

* Document submitted after the established deadline, without editorial changes, and as soon as received by the Secretariat from the Implementation Support Unit.

25 September 2003 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Turkey assumed its obligations emanating from the Convention as a state party as of 1 March 2004.

Current situation and projects

5. As it has been indicated in previous Meetings of the States Parties, Standing Committee meetings and Article 7 reports, a great majority of anti-personnel mines in Turkey are found along the borderlines. Turkey's western borders with Greece and Bulgaria, as well as the border with Georgia however, are mine-free.

6. A total of 637 mined areas containing 97.446 mines in an area measuring a total of 2.615.648 square meters are located around military installations throughout 11 Provinces and an additional 2.537 mined areas containing 906.497 mines in an area measuring a total of 212.116.659 square meters are located in border areas along 14 Provinces.

7. In addition to the areas highlighted above, there are a total of 346 suspected mined areas. These areas are suspected due to accidents that have occurred in these areas. The size of these areas is unknown.

8. Since the initiation of clearance activities a total of six areas have been cleared on the Syrian border leading to the clearance of 1.150.297 square meters and culminating in the clearance of 974 anti-tank mines and 760 anti-personnel mines. This progress has been carried out by the Turkish Army and mine clearance companies.

9. In addition to this clearance, an additional 24.287 anti-personnel mines have been cleared from areas other than border areas and in border areas other than the Syrian border in order to achieve military objectives. These areas are not considered cleared given that, in most cases, only a section of an area has been cleared to allow safe passage of military personnel.

10. Mine clearance along Turkey's southern border constitutes the priority, in particular the borderline with Syria, which is the longest land border of Turkey. The "Law on the Tender and Mine Clearing Activities along the Land Border between Turkey and Syria", adopted by the Turkish Parliament and approved by the President on 17 June 2009, provides the necessary legal basis for mine clearing activities along the border between Turkey and Syria. On that basis, the Ministry of National Defence is entrusted with the task of implementation.

11. In this context, the project for the initiation of clearance was started in February 2011, with the signing of a "Sales Agreement for Quality Management, Consultancy Support and Certification" between the Ministry of Defence and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA), now the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Support Agency (NSPA). This was followed by the announcement of a tendering process in April 2011 and following submission of files by candidate firms, establishment of a short-list of firms in consultation with NSPA. Subsequently, a second and more detailed assessment of firms was conducted and short-listed firms were invited for tender. In May 2012, the firms were taken to the Syrian border for site survey. The survey covered an area of 527 km. The final selection process of companies is currently continuing and the signing of contracts is expected to take place as soon as the evaluation process is completed.

12. The mobilization process of the teams to take their designated positions along the border area before clearance work can actually begin is expected to take around three months.

13. On condition of absence of any force-majeure that would delay the clearance activities, completion of clearance of mines along the Syrian border is expected at the end of 2019.
14. In carrying out the duties entrusted to it, the Ministry of Defence has established a “Project Implementation Group” to determine the precise coordinates of the mined areas, which will then be entered on digital maps. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the financing of the project.
15. The project to clear the mined borderline with Syria, which is 911 kilometres long and on average 350 metres wide, is a major undertaking by any standard. The project not only entails clearance of mines in a safe and environmentally sound manner, but also involves the simultaneous establishment of a new physical border security system with the involvement of other sub-contractors.
16. Established in pursuant to the law on the clearance of mines along the Syrian border, an “Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board”, which commenced working on 26 October 2010, is responsible to coordinate work between relevant government bodies pertaining to mine clearance activities and related undertakings. The board meets regularly and practically functions as the “National Mine Action Authority”.
17. Equally important in this context has been the coordinated work by the Board for the development of Turkish Mine Action Standards (TMAS). “International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)” has constituted a template for TMAS to a great extent. In the meantime, a similar set of standards has been prepared to be utilized on the Syrian border prior to full adoption of Turkish Mine Action Standards.
18. Accordingly, once the necessary national legislation is enacted, the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board will officially assume the functions of a “National Mine Action Authority”.
19. “The Law on the Establishment of a National Mine Authority and Mine Action Centre” has already been drafted and is awaiting final input from other Ministries, upon which it will be presented to the Prime Ministry, and thereon submitted to the Parliament.
20. The Turkish-Syrian border has been divided into six segments taking into account various factors, including -most of all- physical properties of the areas. The segments have a different order of priority based on this assessment and clearance activities will follow this prioritized order.
21. The total length of the borderline is 911 kilometres and the mined area, including the adjacent mine-free security buffer, is just over 190 square kilometres
22. As has been the case with Turkey’s Article 4 activities, clearance activities along the Syrian border and in areas other than borders, are being fulfilled by means of national sources, with earmarked finances.
23. Another project towards fulfilling Article 5 obligations of Turkey, is the decision to start clearance on the eastern borders of Turkey, starting north and moving southwards; and to operationalize this in the light of experience gained from the massive scale clearance on the Syrian border*.
24. *(Should current events across the border in Syria render the area of clearance activities insecure for clearance teams and thus necessitate delay in their dispatch to the area, it is possible that clearance work at the eastern borders begins at an earlier date than the Syrian border. Thus, commencement of clearance activities along the Syrian border does not necessarily constitute a prerequisite to beginning work along the eastern borders.)

25. The sum of the area that will be cleared of mines within the framework of the first phase of a three-phase project is 13.5 million square meters.
26. The second phase of this three-phase project to clear the area further south of the eastern borders has also been prepared and covers an approximate area of 2.4 million square meters. The financing agreements for both the first and second phases of the projects have been signed with the European Union at the end of 2012.
27. Nearly two-thirds of the total estimated cost of the three-phase project will be covered by the European Union under the “Pre-accession Financial Assistance Scheme”.
28. Turkey’s eastern and southern borders are not only very long but also topographically very difficult, regional security issues notwithstanding. While the work on clearance of mines has begun rather belatedly due to bureaucratic necessities and other factors, serious work has been ongoing for some time and there is genuine effort and political will to proceed apace for the fulfilment of Article 5 obligations of Turkey.
29. The third phase of clearance along the eastern and south-eastern borders encompasses an area stretching along the southernmost border of Iran and covering the entire Iraqi border area. Drafting of a project that would include the modalities for financing of this phase is yet to begin.
30. Until now, mine clearance in areas other than borders has been conducted only on a limited scale to clear pathways for urgent needs. Full clearance activities in areas other than borders are awaiting the establishment of the National Mine Action Authority and the Mine Action Centre which will supervise the mine clearance activities in Turkey and issue certificates in accordance with the IMAS. The continuation of terrorist threat is also a factor creating security problems for mine clearance operations and teams. Work on the establishment of the National Mine Action Authority and the Mine Action Centre by the Turkish Ministry of National Defence is ongoing. It is predicted that mine clearance for in these areas will be conducted between the years of 2015 and 2022 following the establishment of the National Mine Action Authority and the Mine Action Centre in accordance with acquired experiences from the mine clearance projects for the Syrian and Eastern borders and will be finished in 2022.

Humanitarian and economic implications of landmines to Turkey

31. Within the span of nine years since Turkey has joined the Ottawa Convention, a total of 316 people have been killed and another 734 injured due to anti-personnel landmines-related incidents. The majority of the casualties are directly as a result of anti-personnel landmines emplaced by the Kurdish Workers Party/Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan/KONGRA-GEL terror organisation, and to a lesser extent, accidents caused by trespassing into mined areas. To this day, landmines continue to remain a safety concern for both military personnel and civilians alike. Actual casualties are often compounded by the extensive use of improvised explosive devices’ by the same terror organisation.
32. On the economic front, losses are incurred by the local populace mainly due to inaccessibility to a portion of arable land –especially along the Syrian border- and also due to casualties among livestock that stray into minefields.
33. It is initially estimated that an eight-year extension period (until March 2022) will be required for the clearance of all laid anti-personnel mines in Turkey. This timeframe is subject to revision pending progress with tenders and clearance activities on the ground.
34. Turkey commits itself to advise States Parties of any alteration to the timeframe.