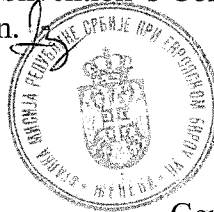




No. 1515-1/2018

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Chair of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's Committee on Article 5 Implementation, and has the honour to enclose herewith, the reply of the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC) to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Chair of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 28 June 2018

***Chair of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban
Convention's Committee on Article 5 Implementation***

Replies to Committee on Article 5 Implementation
Questions Concerning the Request Submitted by Serbia

1. The request contains annual output over the course of the previous extension period including a total of 1,976,416 square meters of which a total of 1,016,085 square meters were cancelled. The request would benefit from additional information on **how this experience has been factored into the expected outcomes** within Serbia's request for extension. The request would further benefit from, if possible, a **disaggregation between expected outputs through area cancelled through non-technical survey, area reduced through technical survey and area cleared.**

As has been stated in our Extension Request Plan, the dynamics of implementation of our demining projects are affected by provision of funds, that is if the funds for implementation of our projects are not provided, our plan is directly affected and more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, if funds are provided, the work plan could be implemented in due time.

Since the previous extension request, that is, in 2018, the Government of Serbia has allocated twice the funds from the state budget for demining operations than in previous years.

Furthermore, in 2017 and 2018, the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) has prepared technical survey projects, in a form adjusted to the context of Serbia, in response to the stated preference of international donors for technical survey above clearance.

2. The request indicates that Serbia's preference is manual demining, nevertheless, Serbia is willing to conduct technical survey, where appropriate. The request would benefit from a more detailed description of **how Serbia intends to apply survey and clearance methodologies** to the remaining challenge. The request would further benefit from including **information on relevant national mine action standards** to be applied.

The following methods have been employed and will be employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- Non-technical survey
- Technical survey
- Clearance
- Mechanical demining
- Canine demining

In Serbia, an initial survey which includes collection of data and analysis of available documentation on mine emplacement is employed, as well as a non - technical survey (NTS), which follows after an analysis of previously collected data, conditions in the field, statements by local population, hunters, foresters, people dealing with exploitation of wood, representatives of Civil Protection and Police, amongst others. One significant indicator has been data on accidents that have occurred.

Non – technical survey determines borders of the suspected area, coordinates of the location, type of mines and other UXO, allocation of land, impact on environment.

Technical survey is employed to additionally collect information by technical methods on a suspected area and in case when the data collected by a non – technical survey are

not sufficient for suspected areas to be declared hazardous or safe. Technical survey is done by the combination of several methods - manual detection by metal detectors and visually. Manual detection is conducted in prospections. The scheme and dimensions of a prospection depend on land configuration, and all in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

Clearance is conducted in accordance with the IMAS. It is done by a manual method at the depth of 20 cm.

Apart from a manual method, demining machines can be used, as well as dogs.

The size of the area to be cleared is determined on the basis of processed data which have been collected by a non-technical survey.

The development of relevant national mine action standards is still in progress.

The main reasons why Serbia's preference is manual demining are as follows:

-Unregistered mine contaminated areas (groups of mines): The remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

-Climactic conditions: Most of the remaining suspected mined areas in Serbia are mountainous with challenging terrain and thick vegetation. The fact that these areas have not been accessed since the end of the conflict (2000-2001), due to suspicion of mines, means that the land is unmanaged, making it even less accessible.

Given the above, SMAC believes that most of the above areas are not appropriate for the use of machinery or mine detection dogs.

3. The request indicates that one technical survey project totaling 113,600 square meters (Ravno Bučje Village, Bujanovac Municipality) is in progress. The request also indicated that Demining operations of two areas in the Djordjevac Village, Bujanovac Municipality, totaling 535,300 square meters, will follow upon securing of international funds and that at the time of writing this document, only national funds are available for these two project tasks. The request would benefit from including any progress in implementation as well how this, if at all, affects that timeline for completion.

Technical survey project totaling 113,600 square meters (Ravno Bučje Village, Bujanovac Municipality) was completed in May 2018, with 5 AP mines and 2 UXO found and safely destroyed.

For demining operations of two areas in the Djordjevac Village, national funds are available and will be matched with US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement donation through ITF Enhancing Human Security. ITF will conduct tender procedures for the selection of a contractor. Following the completion of tender procedures, the field operations might commence and be completed by the end of this year.

4. The request indicates that an additional 1,029,760 square meters of suspected hazardous area was discovered over the previous extension period. The request would benefit from information on the circumstances which led to the discovery of these areas and if this type of situation is anticipated in the future.

As mentioned, the remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

Based on the results of a demining project in Bujanovac in 2012 when on a relatively large area, a relatively small number of mines was discovered, as well as on the results of survey operations and subsequent statements of local population, Serbian Mine Action Centre conducted the reclassification of the area suspected to be mine contaminated in 2015 based on an additional check up on the field, which included a slight increase of suspected hazardous area for 335,500 square meters.

In addition, at the request of the Emergency Management Headquarters of the Bujanovac Municipality and subsequent findings of the existence of new areas contaminated with groups of mines and increased risk for local population, the SMAC conducted non-technical survey of these new areas throughout 2016 and early 2017, which resulted in an increase of suspected hazardous area for 694,260 square meters.

Given that the Republic of Serbia does not have resources or capacities to conduct continual survey of its overall state territory, and is compelled to rely on the information from the terrain, all the information obtained from sources such as local population, hunters, foresters, representatives of civil protection and police, amongst others, SMAC treats as being very important and deserving attention. Upon receiving the information of potential suspected hazardous area, SMAC staff undertakes all necessary steps to verify this information in the terrain, and based on all available methods include or exclude the area from the category of mine suspected.

The Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to fulfillment of its obligations within the deadline undertaken and above all to providing safety to its people.

5. The annual outputs and budget (from nation and international sources) indicated in the request for the extension period drop significantly following 2020, by almost 50%. The request would benefit from increased **information on the reason for this expected reduction.**

Since 2015, the funds for demining operations have been allocated from the Serbian State Budget (around 100.000 EUR) and this trend has been continued on an annual basis.

In 2018, the Serbian Government allocated the double amount of the funds for demining operations (around 200.000 EUR) and we expect the funds for demining operations to be allocated by the Serbian Government throughout the requested extension period, too. This proves Serbia's strong commitment to full implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

In the Extension Request Work Plan, for the years of the requested extension, we presented an estimate of future possibilities based on a current trend.

We expect the majority of operations to be completed in the first half of the requested period, if the needed funds are available.

Please note, that as for the national funds we receive the confirmation of the amount of available state budget funds on an annual level by the end of each calendar year for the year to come.

We are aware that the national funds are not sufficient to completely resolve the landmine problem, therefore, at the same time, we urge donors to support our efforts

throughout the requested extension period by providing substantial funds for demining operations.

At the time of writing the draft, we did not have confirmation by potential donors of the funds available for Serbia in the years of the requested extension period, either for mine clearance or other explosive remnants of war. Just like in the case of national funds, we presented an estimate of future possibilities based on a current trend.

6. The request indicates that if funds are available, Serbia would be able to finish its obligations before the end of the requested extension period. The request would benefit from information concerning a **detailed resource mobilization strategy** highlighting planned efforts to mobilize additional national and international resources to complete implementation as soon as possible.

Regarding funding, the Republic of Serbia has already undertaken concrete steps in order to present its challenges and needs to potential donor countries and other relevant stakeholders. Only last year the SMAC had many bilateral meetings with several states in which we presented our main challenges in landmine clearance completion process. Those meetings have resulted in donations which were realized this year by the US, Japan and Republic of Korea, and will lead to implementation of our demining projects.

Furthermore, the Republic of Serbia has followed the recommendation of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance to engage itself in an individualized approach, that is, Serbia has accepted a Platform to hold a frank discussion with relevant stakeholders on the current status of Serbia's national programme, the needs and challenges in implementing its mine clearance and other obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its commitments under the Maputo Action Plan.

On the margins of the June 2018 Intersessional meeting, the Republic of Serbia organized a meeting inviting potential donors, experts and other stakeholders, to attend the presentation aimed at raising attention to its problem and seeking adequate financial support to solve the pending Article 5 obligations.

In addition to the continuation of approaching potential donors through series of bilateral meetings, SMAC will continue to raise awareness of the funding problem lobbying with state authorities, public enterprises and local authorities to fund clearance from contaminated areas for which they are directly interested.

7. The request indicates that Serbia aims to finalize implementation by 2023. The request would benefit from information concerning **how Serbia intends to structure its organisational capacities to respond to residual contamination following completion.**

Unfortunately, apart from landmines, the Republic of Serbia suffers from additional contamination by unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO. All these unexploded ordnance are either remaining as a result of the 1999 bombing, or are caused by an explosion and fire in a military depot, or are remaining from previous wars.

Simultaneously with solving landmine problem, but also following the completion of landmine problem, the Republic of Serbia will have to deal with the residual

contamination funding the operations from national, international and other available sources.

Furthermore, as regards destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition, the role of the Serbian Mine Action Centre will focus on issues such as analysis of impact of surplus weapons and ammunition influence on civilians, analysis of risk in case of explosions caused by weapons and ammunition damaging, inadequate storing, instability of components and similar.