

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 request submitted under Article 5

Request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention

Executive summary

Submitted by Serbia

1. The former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction on 18 September 2003. The Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004. The continuity to the Convention in relation to the Republic of Serbia was established in accordance with Article 60 of the Charter of the State Union. Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention.
2. At the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties (17MSP), the Republic of Serbia was granted a four-year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention until **1 March 2023**.
3. At the time of the 17MSP, the mine contaminated area totaled 2,354,540 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac with 12 areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines.
 - i. In 2018 five projects were implemented and clearance of the area of 623,020 square metres were completed in the Municipality of Bujanovac. The funds for four projects were donated, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, by the United States of America (US) and the Republic of Korea and funds for one project were provided by the Republic of Serbia matched through ITF with donations from the US and the Republic of Korea.
 - ii. In 2019, three projects by the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC) were implemented in the Municipality of Bujanovac, total area of 606,210 square metres. The funds for one project were provided by the Serbian Government and matched, through ITF, by the US and Republic of Korea donations. One project was funded by Japan, with the support of the U.S., through ITF. One project was financed by the Joint Stock Company "Elektromreža Srbije" - Transmission System Maintenance Division, Belgrade.
 - iii. In 2020, one SMAC project was implemented in the Municipality of Bujanovac, total area of 269,280 square metres. The funds were provided by the Serbian Government and matched, through ITF, by the US donation.



- iv. In 2021, one demining project was implemented, total area of 294,230 square metres. The funds provided by the Serbian Government and matched, through ITF, by the US and Republic of Korea donations.

Summary of areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines as of March 2018

Municipality	Village	Number of areas known to contain anti-personnel mines	Number of areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Total number of areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Amount of area known to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Amount of area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Total amount of area known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)
	Ravno Bučje		3	3		575,020	575,020
	Končulj		5	5		1,181,820	1,181,820
Bujanovac	Dobrosin	1	1	1	248,000		248,000
	Đorđevac	1	1	1	145,100		145,100
	Lučane	1	1	1	73,200		73,200
	Turija	1	1	1	131,400		131,400
Total	6	12	12		2,354,540		2,354,540

4. During the current extension period a total of 1,792,740 square metres were cleared resulting in the destruction of 61 anti-personnel mines and 2,952 items of explosive ordnance through clearance.

5. Serbia's preference is manual demining because of unregistered mine contaminated areas and climactic conditions.

6. SMAC believes that most of the above areas are not appropriate for the use of machinery or mine detection dogs. However, the following methods can be employed in Serbia to release areas suspected to contain mines:

- i. Non-technical survey;
- ii. Technical survey;
- iii. Clearance;
- iv. Mechanical demining;
- v. Canine demining.

Progress against milestones 2018-2023

Year	Projected milestones		Cancelled area	Total area released	Number of anti-personnel mines destroyed		Size of newly identified/suspect hazardous areas
	Survey	Clearance	Cleared area (square metres)	(square metres)	Number of anti-personnel mines destroyed	Number of other explosive items destroyed	
2018		649,000	623,020	623,020	29	1,347	
2019		462,400	606,210	606,210	22	15	
2020		467,880	269,280	269,280	1	1,586	
2021		269,240	294,230	294,230	9	4	
2022		291,400					
2023		214,620					
Total		2,354,540	1,792,740	1,792,740	61	2,952	

7. The following circumstances have impeded Serbia from complying with its four-year period of first extension request:

- (a) Unregistered mine contaminated areas;

- (b) Newly discovered mine suspected areas in Bujanovac in October 2019 and August 2021;
- (c) Climactic conditions;
- (d) Contamination other than mines;
- (e) COVID-19 crisis.

8. The remaining mine contamination presents a severe socioeconomic impact on the municipality of Bujanovac. This municipality is the most underdeveloped municipality in Serbia. Mine contaminated areas affect the safety of people. Presence of mines hinders safe exploitation of woods, development of cattle breeding and mushroom picking, which happen to be the main source of income of locals and in that way, mines additionally impoverish them. In addition, road communications are blocked, environment affected, and fire risks increased.

9. As of March 2022, in the Republic of Serbia there are three areas suspected to contain groups of anti-personnel mines totaling 561,800 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac. In addition suspected mined areas have been discovered in Bujanovac Municipality but data on the scope of the contamination of the newly discovered areas are not available at the time of writing this request.

10. While achievements regarding the fulfillment of Article 5 obligations have been significant so far and the aim is to fulfill the remaining obligations within the short timescale, the Republic of Serbia is facing a number of difficulties, in particular the unpredictability of secure financial resources. Furthermore, simultaneously with mine clearance, the Republic of Serbia has to deal with the clearance of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other unexploded ordnance (UXO), since they also block significant resources and the development and infrastructural projects.

11. Having in mind all the aspects of this issue, especially inadequate financial resources, the remaining area to be cleared and its characteristics, the Republic of Serbia is requesting extension of the deadline under Article 5 for a period of 21 months (1 March 2023-31 December 2024). Serbia believed that a 21-month period is a realistic period in which Serbia can undertake non-technical survey of Bujanovac municipality and gather the necessary information to develop a meaningful forward-looking request by 30 March 2024, including a workplan that will outline how Serbia will fulfill its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

12. During the period of this request Serbia will put maximum effort into clearing all known confirmed hazardous known areas measuring 561,800 square metres. National and international funds for 2022 clearance operations have been secured.

13. As regards to the newly discovered suspected mined areas, Serbia is projecting that it will need 15 months to recruit survey teams, complete non-technical survey and analyse all data in order to develop a forward-looking work plan. In this way, Serbia is requesting only the period of time necessary to complete non-technical survey of Bujanovac municipality and gather necessary information to design a workplan for completion as part of a subsequent request to be submitted 30 March 2024. The aim is to project with greater certainty the amount of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that will be required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations. The global goal of a mine free world by 2025 remains Serbia's objective.

Summary of areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines as of March 2022

Municipality	Village	Number of areas known to contain anti-personnel mines	Number of areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Total number of areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines	Amount of area known to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Amount of area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)	Total amount of area known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (square metres)
	Ravno Bučje		1	1		390,300*	390,300*
Bujanovac	Končulj		1	1		143,500	143,500
	Dobrosin		1	1		28,000	28,000
Total	3		3	3			561,800*

14. In **2022**: an area of 561,800 square metres which includes the Municipality of Bujanovac; Villages of Ravno Bučje, Djordjevac and Dobrosin will be addressed and in **2022-2023**: Bujanovac Municipality will be surveyed.

15. For newly identified suspect hazardous areas, non - technical survey, including desk assessments, analysis of available data and a wide range of information gathering, and analysis functions will contribute to identifying, accessing, collecting, and define where mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) are to be found, as well as where they are not, to support land cancellation, reduction and clearance decision making processes

Work Plan: Land Release in the Municipality of Bujanovac (2022-2025)

Year	Municipality	Village	<i>Estimated mine suspected area to be subject to technical survey/clearance (square metres)</i>	<i>Source of funding and amount*</i>
2022		Ravno Bučje, Končulj, Dobrosin	561,800	National Budget (260,000 EUR) and international donations matched through ITF (500,000 EUR)
2023 ¹	Bujanovac	Subject to survey and assesment	Subject to survey and assesment	
2024		Subject to survey and assesment	Subject to survey and assesment	Per year: National Budget (260,000 EUR) and international donations matched through ITF or other sources of funding (500,000 EUR)
2025		Subject to survey and assesment	Subject to survey and assesment	
	Total		561,800*	1,040,000 EUR + and international donations matched through ITF or other sources of funding 2,000,000 EUR

¹ At the time of writing, there is no confirmation by potential donors of the funds available for Serbia for the period 2023-2025. In addition to funds from national budget (1,040,000 EUR), Serbia estimates that around 2,000,000 EUR would be needed from international donors.

16. SMAC has tentatively provided donor funds to start a non-technical survey project, that will include two mixed survey teams (one Serbian and one Albanian team of two surveyors each), which will be fully trained and equipped to conduct required tasks. These activities will be supervised and monitored by SMAC and in cooperation with the local authorities.

17. The project will take up to one year and will focus on the areas where forests fires occurred, and explosions could be heard but will also include all the other areas in Bujanovac where the existence of other mine indicators might be reported. During this period, technical survey projects will be developed, as well as land release projects for the assessed areas.

18. The starting areas for non-technical survey that will include all of Bujanovac Municipality are:

- i. 1,777,367 square metres - in the area of the village Djordjevac, which borders on the north side with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0240/20 and with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0193-4/17.
- ii. 156,125 square metres- between the villages of Veliki Trnovac and Konculj, which on the south side borders with the Project "Turijsko brdo 1" 0134/12, and on the north side with the Project "Konculj -Transmission Line 1 and 2", number 0240/21.
- iii. 1,317,575 square metres- located in the area of the village of Konculj, between the villages Konculj and Dobrosin, which is bordered on the north by the Project "Konculj Singerit" 0209/18.
- iv. 830,383 square metres - located between the villages of Lucane and Dobrosin, which on the north side borders with the Projects "Dobrosin" 0199/18, "Dobrosin 1" 0245/21, and on the west and east side borders with the Project for Integrated Approach to Mine Risk Land Release 0179/15.
- v. 286,193 m² in the village of Nesalce, located west of the Nesalce village, on the local road to the village of Vrban.

19. The estimated size of the areas to be surveyed is 4,367,643 square metres. Serbia intends to release the total amount through the following land release methodologies:

- i. Non -Technical Survey: 2,367,643 square metres cancelled
- ii. Technical survey: 1,500,000 square metres reduced
- iii. Clearance: 500,000 square metres cleared

Workplan of project implementation

<i>Expected project implementation time</i>	<i>Activities / expected results of project implementation</i>	<i>Affected population and survey area</i>
12 months	<p>Identification of contaminated and hazardous areas through survey activities, development of new and updating of existing projects (Technical survey, demining, ERW clearance, permanent marking, education of the population on the ERW risk)</p> <p>Assessment of the impact of mines and ERW on affected target groups of the population;</p> <p>Identified suspected/confirmed contaminated area and safe for further use/cancelled area;</p>	<p>The municipality comprises an area of 461 square kilometres</p> <p>38,300 inhabitants</p> <p>59 villages</p> <p>30 local communities</p> <p>Starting areas for non-technical survey:</p> <p>4,367,643 square metres</p>

<i>Expected project implementation time</i>	<i>Activities / expected results of project implementation</i>	<i>Affected population and survey area</i>
	<p>Identified suspected/confirmed contaminated area marked in Serbian and Albanian;</p> <p>The size of the area where the survey was conducted;</p> <p>Interviews with members of affected communities conducted;</p> <p>Messages of safe and risk behaviour with mines and other ERW conveyed to the population;</p> <p>Based on the collected data, projects were developed for technical survey, demining or ERW clearance by the SMAC.</p>	

20. The new Decree, developed by SMAC in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, will support Serbia's efforts to implement its remaining challenge as efficiently and effectively as possible in the following manner:

- i. Introduce land release concept, not defined in the former decree;
- ii. Streamline and improve monitoring and evaluation of demining operations;
- iii. Introduce the need for development of national standards.

21. Upon completion of this project, SMAC will have a clear picture of the contamination, which means that by 30 March 2024 Serbia will submit a request to extend its Article 5 deadline, including an updated work plan for the completion of its Article 5 obligations remaining period of the request.

22. Mine risk education (MRE) activities will also be conducted in all 59 villages of the Municipality of Bujanovac.

23. MRE activities will be conducted in Bujanovac schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The target group is the most vulnerable population - children, girls and boys, but also women and men. The mine risk education will be carried out by SMAC and non-technical survey teams. Financial resources are covered by non-technical survey project developed by SMAC.

24. Serbia insists on gender equality. During survey and community liaison activities, women, men and children are consulted. In addition, there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance. SMAC is planning to conduct MRE project for the newly discovered mine contaminated areas in Bujanovac, which will be a huge employment opportunity for both women and men.

25. Despite the difficult economic situation in the country, the Republic of Serbia will endeavor to secure funding of demining either by submitting projects to ITF applying for their funding or lobbying with other foreign donors to provide funds for implementation of projects. The funds from the Serbian State Budget will be provided to support the on-going work of the SMAC – salaries of the staff, running costs (electricity, water, heating), office and consumption material costs, fuel costs, maintenance of vehicles, costs of the SMAC staff insurance – as well as survey activities, development of adequate project tasks for demining/clearance of locations confirmed to be contaminated by mines, cluster munitions and other UXO, follow-up of the implementation of project tasks and conduct of demining quality assurance and quality control.

26. It is expected that the Serbian Government will continue allocating funds for demining operations throughout the requested extension period. In addition to funds from the national

budget (1,040,000 EUR), an estimated 2,000,000 EUR will need to be secured from international donors.

27. Projects for clearance and technical survey have been developed for known areas (561,800 sqm) and will be carried out in 2022 -funds provided by Serbia and matched through ITF with U.S. and Republic of Korea donations).

28. Non-technical survey project for newly identified suspected hazardous areas (SHA) has been developed and will be carried out in 2022-2023 - SMAC is in negotiations with ITF and U.S. Embassy to find the donors funds.

29. Funds needed for the period 2022-2025 for land release of the newly identified SHA ~3.040.000 EUR (national funds ~ 1.040.000 EUR and donations through ITF and other available funding sources ~2.000.000 euro are still pending.

30. Regarding funding, in the previous period, Serbia has undertaken concrete steps in order to present its challenges and needs to potential donor countries and other relevant stakeholders. SMAC had many bilateral meetings with representatives of embassies of several donor states which resulted in donations from the US, Japan and Republic of Korea.

31. SMAC will continue to approach potential donor and 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.

32. Most of the remaining suspected mined areas in Serbia are mountainous with challenging terrain and thick vegetation. Access roads to these areas are often inaccessible, and prior to the commencement of demining operations, Serbian armed forces use their machines and vehicles excavators to clear obstacles.

33. SMAC has requested from the Serbian Government to continue to allocate funds in the years to follow. Despite the economic and overall situation, the Serbian Government has taken ownership of the problem, by continuous allocating of funds for demining operations. However, international support is needed in order to solve the overall mine clearance problem.

34. If international funding is made available for clearance of anti-personnel mines, national funding continues to flow for the implementation of the programme and no additional mined areas are discovered ahead of completion, Serbia intends, by the use of methods such as cancellation and reduction through non-technical and technical survey, manual demining, mechanical demining (where applicable) to complete clearance well before 2025 deadline.

35. **Note:** In the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, there are mined areas, as well as areas contaminated with cluster bombs remaining after the armed conflicts." Pursuant to Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council (Annex II, item 6), it is envisaged that after the withdrawal, an agreed number of the Republic of Serbia personnel, will be allowed to return to perform certain functions, including marking and clearing minefields. As this provision of Annex II has not been implemented, this issue is still within the competence of UNMIK in accordance with Resolution 1244. "