



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION  
17<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES**

**ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION – SERBIA’S EXTENSION REQUEST**

Geneva, 26-30 November 2018

Distinguished President, distinguished delegates,

The delegation of the Republic of Serbia would like to use this opportunity to express our pleasure at participating in the work of the 17th MSP and congratulate and commend Afghanistan on their able Presidency.

Furthermore, we would like to use this opportunity to thank the ISU for their kind and devoted assistance throughout the extension request preparation process. Their constructive comments have assisted in best presenting Serbia’s status, challenges and needs in implementing Article 5 obligations.

Serbia is strongly committed to the full implementation of its obligations from the AP Mine Ban Convention, which is shown by the fact that AP mines are no longer produced in Serbia and the stockpiled AP mines have been destroyed.

With regards to Serbia’s Article 5 Implementation obligations and, in particular, our request for an extension on mine clearance deadline, please note that Serbia is also committed to the fulfilment of its obligations.

However, due to the fact that Serbia has been facing a number of difficulties, such as the lack of adequate financial resources, and presence of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other UXO in addition to mine contaminated areas, whose clearance also requires substantial funds, unfortunately, Serbia is in no position to meet its Article 5 obligation deadline by March 2019.

Consequently, in March 2018, Serbia applied for a second extension of the deadline for fulfilling its obligations to the Convention for a period of 4 years, namely until 2023.

The remaining mine contaminated area is mostly hilly and mountainous terrain of importance to civilians concerning safety of people, cattle breeding, exploitation of woods, mushroom picking, tobacco production.

There are a number of circumstances that present challenges for Serbia in complying with its Article 5 deadline. Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

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

- Vicinity of settlement; mines pose a threat for locals who cultivate their nearby land and pass by the area on a daily basis.
- Climactic conditions: Contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays, most of the suspected area is not appropriate for the use of mine detection dogs or machinery.
- Contamination other than mines: Specificity and complexity of the problem presents the fact that apart from mines still remaining in our country, Serbia also encounters with numerous challenges related to clearance of the areas contaminated with 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.
- Lack of donor funds: Funding from donors for mine action activities has severely diminished through the years. Furthermore, certain donors insist on funding solely cluster munitions clearance and UXO clearance

Serbia is making efforts to solve the problems related to mines and other explosive remnants of war and the Government, within its modest possibilities, allocates funds for demining operations, but given the extent of the problem of mines and other explosive remnants of war, this is not enough to solve the overall mine problem.

Serbia needs international funds and time to complete the task at hand.

Significant results have been achieved in the field of mine clearance in Serbia thanks to donor assistance and engagement of state authorities in Serbia.

We would also like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have helped us in the previous period: US, Germany, Norway, Canada, Czech Republic, Spain, Republic of Korea, Japan and ITF Enhancing Human Security.

We expect to continue our joint engagement until the complete demining of Serbia. Serbia is in its final phase and donors have the opportunity to be part of the completion process.

In 2018, the Government of Serbia has allocated twice the funds from the state budget for demining operations than in previous years, that is 200,000 EUR.

We have requested from our Government to continue to allocate funds in the years of the requested extension, in particular for the 2019 we have asked the funds to be increased and the decision is to be brought in late December 2018.

As you can see, despite economic situation, the Serbian Government has taken more ownership of the problem, first by allocating and then by increasing the funds for demining operations.

Since March 2018, when the extension request was submitted for the remaining area of 2,354,540 sqm in the Bujanovac Municipality, in May 2018, one technical survey project was completed totaling 113,600 sqm with 5 AP mines and 2 UXO found and safely destroyed.

This project was funded by the 2017 Serbian State Budget for demining operations and, matched, through ITF, with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement donation.

In October 2018, two technical survey projects were completed in the Bujanovac Municipality, totaling 216,220 sqm, with 9 AP mines found and safely destroyed.

Two clearance projects are currently in progress, totaling 293,000 sqm. It is expected that they will be completed in late December 2018.

These 4 above mentioned projects have been funded by the 2018 Serbian State Budget for demining operations and, matched, through ITF, with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement donation and the donation of the Republic of Korea. It has been the first time the Republic of Korea has financially supported demining operations in Serbia, for which we are very grateful.

In 2019, Serbia plans to match the available national funds with donor funds through ITF. We are pleased to announce that one demining project will be implemented in 2019 thanks to Japanese donation. This is the first time Japanese Government has earmarked funds for demining operations in Serbia, for which we are very grateful and are looking forward to continuation of our cooperation until the achievement of all set goals.

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

Serbia has followed the recommendation of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance to engage itself in an individualized approach, that is, on the margins of the June 2018 Intersessional meeting, 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.

We would like to take the opportunity to point out that demining does not only contribute to greater security of people and the environment, but also that it has social, economic and other aspects.

Therefore, we especially appeal to donors to help us solve this, for Serbia and its citizens, a huge problem.

In conclusion, as a member of the States Parties, Serbia is fully committed to comply with all the provisions of the Convention by ensuring the total clearance of all known mined areas in Serbia by 2023.

Thank you for your attention.