

Draft analysis of the request submitted by Mauritania for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention

Submitted by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation

(Belgium, Norway, Sri Lanka and Zambia)

1. Mauritania ratified the Convention on 21 July 2000. The Convention entered into force for Mauritania on 1 January 2001. In its initial transparency report submitted on 20 June 2001, Mauritania reported areas in which anti-personnel mines were known or suspected to be emplaced. Mauritania was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 January 2011. Since this time, Mauritania submitted requests for extensions to the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties (10MSP) in 2010 and the Fourteenth Meeting of the States Parties (14MSP) in 2015. On each occasion, the Meetings of the States Parties agreed to unanimously grant Mauritania its request for extension. The request granted to Mauritania by the 14MSP was for 5 years, until 1 January 2021. On 29 November 2018, at the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties (17MSP), Mauritania announced that it had fulfilled its obligation under Article 5 of the Convention.
2. In its Article 7 report submitted on 23 June 2020, Mauritania reported the discovery of previously unknown mined areas and subsequently submitted a request for an extended deadline to the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties (18MSP) in 2020. The request granted to Mauritania by the 18MSP for a period of thirteen months until 31 January 2022.
3. In granting the request, the 18MSP noted that Mauritania was requesting only the period of time necessary to gather and assess data on landmine contamination and other relevant information with a view to develop a meaningful forward-looking plan based on this information. The 18MSP further noted Mauritania's commitment to submit another request by 31 March 2021 containing plans based on a clearer understanding of the extent of the challenge and which would project with greater certainty the amount of time required to complete Article 5 implementation.
4. On 1 June 2021, Mauritania submitted to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation a request for extension of its 31 January 2022 deadline. On 12 July 2021, the Committee wrote to Mauritania to request additional information. On 10 September 2021, Mauritania provided a response. Mauritania's request is for five years, until 31 January 2026.
5. The Committee noted that Mauritania had not adhered to the extension request process established by the States Parties in 2007. The Committee further noted that Mauritania had submitted its request later than the established 31 March 2021 deadline for States Parties submitting requests in 2021. The Committee, however, noted with satisfaction that Mauritania had submitted its request and has engaged in a cooperative dialogue with the Committee, including by meeting with the Committee to discuss the situation in Mauritania.
6. The request indicates that at the time of the 2020 request, Mauritania had identified, through a non-technical survey, 10 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) measuring 4,710,666.248 square metres and 4 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) measuring 3,375,000 square metres of previously unknown mined areas in the Provinces of Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Tires-Zemour and Adrar. The request indicates that, in February and March 2021, an assessment was conducted by the National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement (PNDHD)) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) including both the newly identified mine contaminated areas documented in 2019 and areas redefined and

considered to be under Mauritania’s jurisdiction or control on the Nouadibou’s peninsula. The request further indicates that the assessment mission conducted in 2021 identified a total of 20 mined areas measuring 16,183,490 square metres, including 16 areas in Dakhlet Nouadibou, 2 areas in Tiris Zemour, and 2 areas in Adrar.

7. The Committee wrote to Mauritania requesting greater clarity on the mined areas, in particular information disaggregated by Confirmed Hazardous Areas and Suspected Hazardous Areas and type of contamination. Mauritania responded by indicating that all 20 areas were confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), that five areas were contaminated by anti-personnel mines, five by anti-vehicle mines and 10 were contaminated by both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines as follows:

State	Location ID	CHA	CHA area (m ²)	Identified mines	Type of contamination
Adrar	Mayaateg	1	585,700	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Adrar	Gunive	1	TBC	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon24	1	839,424	APID51,	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon55	1	9,147,780	APID51,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Guergara	1	1,203,880	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Lewej 2	1	329,829	APID51, VS50	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 126	1	132,585	APID51	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 173	1	3,362,364	Type 72	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Rbeit l’echar1	1	62,819	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Wettatlechyakh	1	126,578	APID51	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 1	1	28,794	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 2	1	16,257	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 4	1	14,696	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 6	1	25,565	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 7	1	26,654	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 8	1	66,987	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 3	1	23,638	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 5	1	75,375	VS50,TM57	AP and AV
Tiris Zemmour	Boukhzame	1	63,796	VS50	AP mines
Tiris Zemmour	Guemgoum	1	50,769	APID51	AP mines
Totals		20	16,183,490		

AP = anti-personnel AV = anti-vehicle.

8. The Committee welcomes the information provided by Mauritania and noted the importance of Mauritania continuing to report in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) by providing information on the remaining challenge, disaggregating by ‘suspected hazardous areas’ and ‘confirmed hazardous areas’ and their relative size, as well as by the type of contamination. The Committee also noted the importance of Mauritania reporting on progress in accordance with the land release methodology employed (i.e., cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, or cleared through clearance).
9. The request indicates that the PNDHD recorded six victims of mine and explosive device accidents between the period of 2018-2021 including 1 woman (injured) and 5 men (injured). The request also indicates that the impact of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination in Mauritania is predominantly social and economic, blocking access to pasture and other community resources and occasionally killing livestock. The request further indicates that human accidents also continue to occur, with a number of injuries occurring between 2009- 2021.

The request further indicates that considerable areas in Mauritania are known to be rich in mineral deposits and as such may be developed once the clearance process has been completed. The Committee welcomes Mauritania providing information on mine victims disaggregated by gender and age and encourages Mauritania to continue collecting and reporting information in this manner. The Committee noted that implementation of Article 5 obligations during the requested extension period had the potential of making a significant contribution to improving human safety and socioeconomic conditions in Mauritania.

10. The request further indicates that Mauritania has conducted several mine risk education (MRE) campaigns to change the behaviour of populations in high-risk areas. To ensure effectiveness, the creation of the material takes into consideration gender and the diverse needs of mine-affected communities. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request information concerning the existence of a detailed costed and multi-year plan for mine risk education and reduction efforts in affected communities. Mauritania responded by indicating that a detailed multi-year plan for MRE activities has not yet been developed. The Committee noted the importance of Mauritania ensuring that mine risk education efforts continue in affected communities. The Committee welcomes Mauritania developing its plan in a manner that is tailored to the threat encountered by the population, is sensitive to gender and age and take the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities into account. The Committee further welcomes Mauritania's efforts to ensure the development of sustainable national MRE capacities and to report on progress in this regard in a manner disaggregated by gender and age.
11. As noted, Mauritania's request is for five years, until 31 December 2026. The request indicates that the amount of time requested is based on estimated clearance time, area size, expected levels of contamination and past experience working in similar areas. The also request indicates that these estimates are subject to change based on further survey work. The request indicates that an initial estimated period of six months will be needed in 2021 to mobilise funding, staff, equipment and other resources needed to deploy eight mine clearance teams. Once these eight teams have been mobilized and deployed, if the estimated amount of contamination remains the same, it will be possible to complete additional survey and clearance of the areas identified in a period of five years.
12. The request indicates that during the course of the extension period, Mauritania will carry out the following activities: (i) Build the capacity of the PNHD; (ii) Carry out non-technical and technical survey in affected areas to further delimit the mined areas (2021-2022); (iii) Ensure maintenance of the national database; (iv) Carry out context-specific MRE campaigns; (v) Carry out fundraising efforts to ensure international resources complement national resources; (vi) Carry out clearance of the remaining mined areas, and; (vii) Ensure planning for a national sustainable demining capacity.
13. The request indicates that, in line with the recommendations from the assessment mission, the PNDHD will: (i) Train new civilian staff rather than deploying military engineers to conduct survey and clearance operations; (ii) Train and deploy three non-technical survey (NTS)/technical survey (TS) teams to accurately define the extent of contaminated areas prior to commencing clearance; (iii) Following sufficient NTS/TS, train and deploy eight clearance teams in Nouadibou; (iv) Consider the use of Mine Detection Dogs (MDD) in Nouadibou where the presence of conventionally undetectable and/or deep buried mines exists; (v) Maintain the PNDHD office in Nouakchott, and an operational office in Nouadibou and Tiris Zemour; and, (f) Coordinate with relevant authorities to the extent possible on areas that lie outside of Mauritanian jurisdiction but under Mauritanian de facto control.

14. The request contains a work plan for the survey and clearance of 20 mined areas measuring 16,183,490 square metres, including an estimated time required for the clearance of each area. The request indicates that this timeline is based on a total of eight working teams, working 250 days a year, each team clearing 250 square metres a day. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to gain further clarity on the current capacity present in Mauritania, and the required capacity to fill the required 8 teams, including the number of deminer teams. Mauritania responded by indicating that staff for these teams could be pulled either from the Mauritanian Corps of Engineers or recruited from the local population and that 10 deminers will be provided for each team.
15. The request indicates that land release operations in Mauritania follow well defined National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) which include the carrying out of an evidence-based approach to non-technical survey (NTS), technical survey (TS) and clearance. The request indicates that the NMAS were developed with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and in partnership with all operators in mine action, including NPA. The request also indicates that these NMAS are based on IMAS and best practices from the Mauritania Programme. The request further indicated that Mauritania recognises that since the last update to the NMAS there have been updates to the IMAS and that during the extension period, Mauritania intends to carry out an analysis of its NMAS to ensure that they are up to date and fit for purpose to address the remaining challenge.
16. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request further clarity on the nature of land release operations that will take place in affected areas and if Mauritania intends to conduct non-technical survey or only technical survey and clearance. Mauritania responded by indicating that only additional technical survey and clearance will be required in the 20 areas as contamination has already been confirmed.
17. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request information on the time-line for the review and approval of NMAS. Mauritania indicated in its response that a more concrete timeline for the updating of NMAS has not yet been established but will be taken into account in the planning process. Mauritania further indicated in its response that all relevant and latest updates from IMAS will be incorporated into the NMAS before any further survey or clearance activities take place. The Committee welcomed the response from Mauritania and noted the importance of Mauritania ensuring that NMAS continue to be kept up to date in accordance with the latest International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), adapting them to new challenges and ensuring that it employs best practices to ensure efficient and effective implementation.
18. The request indicates that the prioritization for survey and clearance will be based on the humanitarian impact caused by the anti-personnel mines. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request further information on how priorities for survey and clearance will be established. Mauritania responded indicating that the priorities have been established by the PNDHD in coordination with representatives from the Mauritanian Government and the Mauritanian Army Corps of Engineers.
19. The request indicates that mine action operations will take into account gender and diverse needs of mine-affected communities including in the recruitment of personnel. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request additional details on Mauritania's consideration of gender and diversity issues. Mauritania responded by indicating that gender and diversity are considered to be important cross cutting issues and that the programme will seek the input of all sectors of the population including girls, women, boys and men when designing and implementing all activities. Mauritania also indicated that the program will also seek to achieve gender balanced and diverse survey and battle areas clearance teams to the extent possible, while acknowledging that there

may be some limitations to achieve gender balance from staff seconded from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Committee welcomes the information provided by Mauritania and noted the importance of Mauritania continuing to report on its efforts to ensure that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men are considered and inform all areas of Convention implementation.

20. The Committee, noting that addressing mined areas on border areas may require coordination with relevant authorities, wrote to Mauritania to seek additional information from Mauritania on its efforts to coordinate with relevant authorities to the extent possible concerning areas that lie outside of Mauritanian jurisdiction but under Mauritania's de facto control. Mauritania responded by indicating that once the necessary funding is identified it should be possible to complete survey and clearance in these areas and that Mauritania has a good working relationship with its neighbouring countries and does not expect barriers to operations in these areas.
21. The Committee wrote to Mauritania to request additional information on Mauritania's efforts to maintain a national information management system containing accurate and up-to-date data at the national level on the status of implementation. Mauritania responded by indicating that the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database containing historic records of all clearance undertaken by the PNDHD and has been maintained by PNDHD in coordination with GICHD. Mauritania further indicated that, in the future, it will aim to upgrade and migrate this information to IMSMA Core with the assistance and support of the international community.
22. The request indicates that the plan within the extension request is based on the following risks: (i) Resource mobilization; (ii) Lack of national political will and international support; (iii) Change in the current security situation limiting access to contaminated areas; (iv) Continued impact of the global pandemic; and assumptions: (i) Current estimates of contamination remain the same (no or limited additional areas are identified during further survey and clearance work); and (ii) Development of national capacity to deal with any additional / future identified residual risk.
23. The request indicates that the only financial support currently provided to the mine action programme comes from the Government of Mauritania. The request indicates that Mauritania is seeking the support of the international community for an initial investment of 650,000 USD for equipment and for 1.8 million per year for staff and other running costs until 2026. The request indicates that Mauritania will contribute local staff and that the PNDHD will be responsible to facilitate the smooth implementation of the project including the liaison work with national and local governmental and military officials. The request further indicates that Mauritania will take the following steps to mobilise resources:
 - a. Outreach to international partners and States Parties in a position to provide assistance including through the Individualised Approach;
 - b. Provision of information on the status of implementation through Mauritania's national website and country page on the Convention's website; and
 - c. Provision of updates on implementation at informal and formal meetings of the Convention as well through its Article 7 Report.
24. In noting that Mauritania has provided assumptions and risks to implementation, the fact that delays in securing funding will have an impact on the timeline presented for implementation and the need to ensure stable funding, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Mauritania submitting to the Committee by 30 April 2023 an updated detailed work plan for the remaining period covered by the extension. The Committee emphasized that this work plan should contain an updated list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, annual

projections of which areas remain to be addressed by which organisations during the remaining period covered by the request, and a detailed updated budget. The Committee further emphasized the request should contain an updated context specific mine risk education and reduction plan.

25. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the information provided in the request and subsequently in response to the Committee's questions is comprehensive and clear. The Committee noted that the plan presented by Mauritania is ambitious and contingent upon stable international funding, partnerships with international stakeholders and a stable security situation. The Committee, nonetheless, noted that the plan presented by Mauritania is workable, lends itself well to be monitored, and states clearly which factors could affect progress in implementation. In this regard, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Mauritania reporting annually, by 30 April, to the States Parties on the following:

- a. Progress made relative to the commitments contained in Mauritania's work plan with progress in survey and clearance presented in a manner consistent with IMAS, and progress in accordance with the land release methodology employed, (i.e., cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, or cleared through clearance);
- b. Annual adjusted milestones, including the number of mined areas and amount of mined area to be addressed, and on how priorities have been established;
- c. Updates on Mauritania's efforts to approve updates to its NMAS, in accordance with the latest IMAS;
- d. Updates regarding the development and implementation of a detailed, costed and multi-year plan for context-specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities including information on the methodologies used, the challenges faced and the results achieved, with information disaggregated by gender and age;
- e. Updates on efforts to maintain a national information management system containing accurate and up-to-date data at the national level on the status of implementation;
- f. Updates on the cooperation with neighbouring countries to address border mined areas; and
- g. Resource mobilisation efforts, external financing received and resources made available by the government of Mauritania to support implementation, including to facilitate operations of international demining organisations and national capacities.

26. The Committee noted the importance, in addition to Mauritania reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments regarding the implementation of Article 5 during the period covered by the request and other commitments made in the request at intersessional meetings and Meetings of the States Parties, as well as through its Article 7 reports using the Guide to Reporting.