

**TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES**

**Extension Request of Afghanistan to the Article 5**

**GENEVA, 21-25 NOVEMBER 2022**

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving me the floor,

I would like to thank all states and donors who have generously supported the Mine Action Programs in Afghanistan in the past.

I would like also to share greetings of Ambassador Andisha, who due to other engagements could not be here today.

I would like to also thank the ISU and the analysis group for their support.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan ratified the Anti Personal Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in 2002 and the convention entered in to force for Afghanistan on the first of March 2003.

Mr chair.

The contamination of areas by anti-personnel Mines in Afghanistan is the result of the last 4 decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan. Even before entry into force of the Convention, Afghanistan has been working to address this legacy of conflict in collaboration with several stakeholders. Nevertheless, given the extent of the challenge faced by Afghanistan, on 29 March 2012, Afghanistan submitted a request to extend its initial deadline. As this time, the remaining challenge was reported as 3,847 anti-personnel minefields covering 289.4 square kilometres, 1,266 anti-tank minefields covering 264.95 square kilometres and 155 contaminated areas contaminated by other explosive remnants of war (ERW) covering 41.91 square kilometres. The request further highlighted the need to carry out further survey to gain clarity on contamination. The request was granted by the Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties and a new deadline set for 1 March 2023.

Mr. Chair,

Afghanistan still remains one of the most heavily contaminated countries with the land mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the world. They continue to affect over 1500 communities, 259 districts, in all 34 provinces of the country. Afghanistan had planned to clear all these contaminated areas till March 2023 but unfortunately, due the ongoing conflict and also the last two decades by the Taliban and other terrorist groups, the militarily took over of Afghanistan by the Taliban on August 2021, all the Mine action plans are negatively affected, hence Afghanistan is not in a position to clear all the contaminated areas until march 2023.

Moreover, improvised mines are still used as a weapon of choice and these devices are posing a serious threat to the lives of civilians.

Mr. Chair,

Due to the complexity in the ground and the current crisis in Afghanistan, we submitted an interim extension request from march 2023 until march 2025.

The main purpose for this extension request is to provide additional time for Afghanistan to achieve its goal given the extraordinary situation on the ground.

I would like to kindly ask all member states to grant this extension request.

Dear Colleagues Afghanistan is ready to fulfil all its obligations under the convention once the country has a legitimate and inclusive government.

I thank you Mr. Chair.