
**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 requests submitted under Article 5**Analysis of the request submitted by Ecuador 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, France, Iraq and Sri Lanka)**

1. Ecuador ratified the Convention on 29 April 1999. The Convention entered into force for Ecuador on 1 October 1999. In its initial transparency report submitted on 29 March 2000, Ecuador reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. Ecuador was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 October 2009. Ecuador, believing that it would be unable to do so by that date submitted on 31 March 2008 to the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties (8MSP) a request for an extension of its deadline. Ecuador's request was for eight years until 1 October 2017. The Ninth Meeting agreed unanimously to grant the request.

2. On 28 November 2016, Ecuador submitted to the President of the Fifteenth Meeting of the States Parties (15MSP) a second request for extension of its 1 October 2017 deadline. The request indicated that the main circumstance that impeded clearance within the period of its initial extension period was due to an earthquake that occurred on 16 April 2016. The request further indicated that a state of emergency and national mobilisation was declared, a situation that interrupted the development of humanitarian demining operations for the year. Ecuador's request was for three months, until 31 December 2017. The 15MSP agreed unanimously to grant the request.

3. In granting the request, the 15MSP highlighted in its decision that Ecuador had acted prudently by providing information on the special and unforeseen circumstances that prevented it from meeting its deadline and submitting a request for extension which would allow it to remain in compliance with the Convention and submit a request for extension in accordance with the process established by the States Parties. The 15MSP further noted that in order to function appropriately this process requires requests to be submitted nine months prior to the meeting at which they would be considered in order for an analysis of the request to be prepared and for a cooperative exchange between the requesting State and the Committee on Article 5 Implementation ("the Committee") to take place. The 15MSP noted that the late submission of a request by Ecuador due to force majeure did not permit the Committee to carry out their mandate to analyse the request. In addition, the 15MSP requested that Ecuador submit a detailed request, in accordance with the established process, by 31 March 2017, in order for Ecuador and the States Parties to benefit from a cooperative exchange on the request.



4. On 31 March 2017, Ecuador submitted to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation a request for extension of its 1 December 2017 deadline. On 30 June 2017, the Committee wrote to Ecuador requesting additional information and clarity on key areas of the request. Ecuador provided a response to the Committee's questions on 2 August 2017 and provided further clarification on 9 September 2017. Ecuador's request was for five years, until 31 December 2022. The Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties (16MSP) agreed unanimously to grant the request.

5. In granting the request, the 16MSP noted that while Ecuador had not complied with the principal commitment it had made in its initial extension request, as recorded in the decisions of the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties, to complete implementation by 1 October 2017, it was positive that Ecuador had made continuous progress. The 16MSP further noted that Ecuador was projecting that it would need approximately five years to complete the survey of suspected hazardous areas and clear confirmed hazardous areas and carry out the handover of cleared land. The 16MSP further noted the importance of Ecuador ensuring that the most relevant land-release standards, policies and methodologies, in line with IMAS, are in place and applied for the full and expedient implementation of this aspect of the Convention and encouraged Ecuador to continue seeking improved land release and certification techniques which could lead to Ecuador fulfilling its obligations in a shorter time frame.

6. On 31 March 2022, Ecuador submitted to the Committee a request for extension of its 31 December 2022 deadline. On 15 June 2022, the Committee wrote to Ecuador requesting additional information and clarity on key areas of the request. On 17 August 2022, Ecuador submitted a revised request for extension integrating some of the responses to the Committee's questions. Ecuador's request is for three years, until 31 December 2025. The Committee noted that Ecuador had submitted the request in accordance with the process established by the States Parties and has engaged in cooperative dialogue with the Committee on matters related to the extension request.

7. The request indicates that at the time of Ecuador's last extension request the pending challenge totalled 142,000 square metres in 64 mined areas in the provinces Zamora Chinchipe and Morona Santiago (square kilometre of Tiwinza) estimated to contain 3,975 anti-personnel mines. The request indicates that during the period of 2017-2019 Ecuador carried out operations addressing 11 mined areas measuring 37,756.79 square metres, including 20,790.29 square meters cancelled and 16,966.50 square meters cleared, resulting in the destruction of 309 anti-personnel mines and four items of unexploded ordnance. The request further indicates that during the extension period operations in the square kilometre of Tiwinza were successfully completed through joint operations with Peru. The Committee noted that Ecuador provided information on progress in a matter disaggregated by area cancelled through non-technical survey, area reduced through technical survey and area cleared and encourages Ecuador to continue providing information in this manner. The Committee further welcomes the continued collaboration between Ecuador and Peru to address remaining contamination on their common border.

8. The request indicates that the factor, which in Ecuador's view, acted as impeding circumstances to complete implementation during the extension period was the reassignment of resources to address the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent financial crisis. The request indicates that during the period of 2020 and 2021 no humanitarian demining was carried out. The Committee noted the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and noted the commitment of Ecuador to resume operations to meet Ecuador's remaining Article 5 obligation as soon as possible.

9. The request indicates that the remaining challenge totals 53 mined areas measuring 40,056 square meters estimated to contain a total of 2,941 anti-personnel mines including 27 confirmed hazardous areas measuring 32,535 square metres and 26 suspected hazardous areas measuring 7,521 square metres in the provinces of Zamora Chinchipe. The Committee noted that Ecuador provided information on the remaining challenge in a matter disaggregated by confirmed hazardous areas and suspected hazardous areas, and they respective size, and encourages Ecuador to continue providing information on the remaining challenge in the manner.

10. The request indicates that the remaining contamination has a social, cultural and economic impact on the population including constraining the interaction of family groups that traditionally interact across the contaminated areas. The Committee noted that completion of Article 5 implementation during the requested extension period had the potential of making a significant contribution to improving human safety and socio-economic conditions in affected areas in Ecuador.

11. The request indicates that mine risk education (MRE) campaigns are planned based on studies and analysis of the behaviour of the population in mine affected areas, are delivered in both Spanish and Shuar languages and aim to train community leaders (union and teachers) to transmit MRE messages in their respective communities. The request indicates that in the period of 2017-2019 MRE campaigns reached a total of approximately 300 people. The request also indicates that MRE was carried out with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Defence, Health, Education, Environment and government and entities such as the Integrated Security Service, the Red Cross and the National Risk and Emergency Management Services. The request indicates that during the period of 2020 and 2021 no MRE campaigns were carried out. The Committee noted the importance of Ecuador continuing to carry out MRE programmes in mine affected communities ensuring that they are context-specific and take into account gender and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities. The Committee further noted the importance of Ecuador reporting on the methodologies employed in this regard.

12. As noted, Ecuador's request is for three years, until 31 December 2025. The request indicates that the amount of time requested is in line with the information gathered through non-technical survey of the remaining areas including the topography, meteorological conditions, and lack of access by land. The request also indicates that the assessment of the remaining areas indicates that manual demining is the only method viable to address the remaining challenge which further limits the amount of progress that can be attained. The request further indicates that plans for completion may be affected by several factors, including (a) variable meteorological conditions, (b) hard to access areas, (c) lack of transportation and communication infrastructure, (d) impact of natural disasters, (e) identification of additional areas, and (f) possible emergence of Covid-19 or other health emergencies.

13. The request indicates annual milestones to be achieved during the extension period including a total of 17 mined areas measuring 10,056 square metres to be addressed in 2022; nine mined areas measuring 10,000 square metres to be addressed in 2023; eight mined areas measuring 10,004 square metres to be addressed in 2024, and; 19 mined areas measuring 9,996 square metres to be addressed in 2025. The request indicates that operations will be carried out in six missions to the field of a period of six months each year (June – December).

14. The Committee, in noting that the 26 suspected hazardous areas do not have exact coordinates and that it will take some time to carry out survey to identify them, wrote to Ecuador to request additional information on a detailed plan to survey the remaining areas and a timeline to determine the exact location. Ecuador responded by indicating that it plans to carry out non-technical survey of suspected areas in 2023 and 2024 and provided a table with the breakdown of when it estimates that these areas will be addressed. The Committee noted the importance of Ecuador ensuring that survey efforts are carried out in accordance with IMAS and to continue seeking improved land release and certification techniques which could lead to Ecuador fulfilling its obligations in a shorter time frame.

15. The Committee noted that Ecuador provided projections of the number of areas and the amount of mined area to be addressed annually to achieve completion and encourages Ecuador to continue reporting on adjusted milestones for completion. The Committee also noted that given previous progress implementation and given Ecuador's estimation that suspected areas can be addressed through cancellation and reduction in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), Ecuador may find itself in a situation where it can proceed much faster than that suggested by the amount of time requested and in a more cost-effective manner. The Committee noted the importance of Ecuador making use the full range of practical methods to rapidly, with a high level of confidence, release areas suspected of containing anti-personnel mines. The Committee added that doing so could benefit

Ecuador in ensuring that the grave humanitarian, social and economic impacts outlined by Ecuador in its request are addressed as quickly as possible.

16. The request indicates that a total of 94 mined areas totalling 220,524.95 square metres located in the provinces of Morona Santiago, Pastaza, and Zamora Chinchipe are in the process of quality control. Given that some of the areas highlighted for quality control were addressing in 2022, the Committee wrote to Ecuador to provide information on the reason for their late release and encouraging the provision of a clear calendar for their release during the extension period. The request indicates that quality control of cleared areas was carried out from 2000-2013 by the Comprehensive Mine Action program of the Organisation of American States until their departure in 2013 and that, due to their departure, the job of quality control of cleared areas was not completed. Ecuador indicated that quality control must be carried out in order to complete all phases of the humanitarian demining process. Ecuador further highlighted that the vegetation and terrain typical of the Amazonian tropical forest increases the time and resources necessary for implementation. The Committee noted that Ecuador did not provide a detailed plan for pending quality control operations and highlighted the importance of Ecuador providing such a plan as soon as possible including annual milestones, methodology to be employed, and budget for the carrying out of quality control operations. The Committee further noted the importance of Ecuador ensuring that the most efficient and effective methods are employed, in line with IMAS, to complete quality control operations.

17. The request indicates that areas to be addressed have been prioritized according to the impact of mines on the population and particularly the proximity of communities to mined areas. The request indicates that this approach allows Ecuador to return land to the affected communities and facilitate the potential for the socio-economic development of the country. The Committee noted the importance of Ecuador continuing to assess the situation and prioritizing its operation in accordance with the impact of mined areas on the population.

18. The request indicates that during the extension period temporary and permanent marking will be emplaced with the objective of preventing accidents. The request indicates that this marking will be carried out in accordance with IMAS. The Committee wrote to Ecuador to request additional information on a detailed, costed and multi-year plan for context specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities. Ecuador responded by indicating that it will continue implementing its MRE campaigns on a yearly basis as highlighted in the request. The Committee noted Ecuador's commitment to carrying out MRE and would welcome the provision of a detailed and costed plan for the duration of the extension period.

19. The request provides information on the institutional, human and material resources available and provides a list of additional actions that will be taken over the course of 2022 – 2025 including:

- (a) Procurement of new material and technical equipment for humanitarian demining operations;
- (b) Training for demining personnel in demining techniques and use of new equipment;
- (c) Continuation of meetings with the national humanitarian demining authorities of Peru.

20. The request indicates that the engineering battalion 68 "COTOPAXI" of the Army Corps of Engineers is the sustainable national capacity that can address any previously unknown areas discovered following completion. The request further indicates that this battalion includes women deminers trained in humanitarian demining operations. The request further indicates that the training of women humanitarian demining specialists depends on the assigning of female personnel by the General Direction of Human Talent of the Army of Ecuador. The Committee noted that Ecuador had a sustainable national demining capacity in place. The Committee further noted the information provided concerning gender and the importance of Ecuador providing additional detailed information on how it plans to mainstream gender and diversity within Ecuador's mine action programme.

21. The request indicates that Ecuador has approved a project entitled “Release of known land affected by landmines or unexploded ordnance on the common border of Ecuador and Peru” to be carried out during the period of 2022-2025 to address the remaining 40,056 square metres located in the province of Zamora Chinchipe allotting a total of 9,449,519.80 US dollars for its implementation. The request further indicates that pending quality control of previously cleared areas is not contemplated in the budget of the project and budget and that international support is required to complete this process. The Committee acknowledged the significant commitment of the National Government of Ecuador to its demining program through the budget assigned as well as through the allocation of personnel and other resources to carry out demining activities. The Committee further noted the requirement for international support to complete the quality control process and noted the importance of Ecuador developing a resource mobilization plan to support implementation, including by taking advantage of the individualised approach.

22. The Committee noted that the request includes other relevant information that may be of use to the States Parties in assessing and considering the request, including photos, maps, information on land release methodologies, and an annexed work plan.

23. The Committee noted the information provided in the revised request in response to the Committees questions. In recalling that the implementation of Ecuador’s national demining plan will be affected by new information from ongoing clearance and survey operations as well as the risk factors identified in the request, the Committee noted that the Convention would benefit from Ecuador submitting to the Committee by 30 April 2024, an updated detailed work plan for the remaining period covered by the extension. The Committee noted that this work plan should contain information on progress made, an updated list of all areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, annual projections of which areas and what area would be dealt with during the remaining period covered by the request and a revised detailed budget.

24. The Committee noted that the plan presented by Ecuador is workable, lends itself well to be monitored, and states clearly which factors could affect the pace of implementation. The Committee also noted that the plans are contingent upon the findings of survey effort as well as challenges faced by Ecuador. In this regard, the Committee noted that the States Parties would benefit from Ecuador reporting annually, by 30 April, to the States Parties on the following:

- i. Progress made relative to the commitments contained in Ecuador’s work plan and the results of survey and clearance efforts in a manner consistent with IMAS in accordance with the land released methodology employed, (i.e. cancelled through non-technical survey, reduced through technical survey, and cleared through clearance);
- ii. The impact of survey and clearance outcomes and update on how additional clarity obtained may change Ecuador’s assessment of the remaining implementation challenge and timeframe for implementation;
- iii. The remaining challenge in a manner consistent with IMAS and disaggregated by suspected hazardous areas and confirmed hazardous areas and their respective sizes;
- iv. Adjusted milestones, including information on the number of areas and amount of mined area to be addressed manually and how priorities have been established;
- v. Progress, methodologies employed, annual milestones and anticipated costs for quality control operations and progress in the handover of previously released land for the productive use of mine affected communities;
- vi. Updates regarding the implementation of mine risk education and reduction efforts in affected communities, including information on the methodologies used, the challenges faced and the results achieved, with information disaggregated by gender and age;

- vii. Resource mobilization efforts, external financing received and resource made available by the Government of Ecuador to support implementation efforts; and
- viii. Information on how implementation efforts take into consideration the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boy and men and the needs and experiences of people in affected communities.

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