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# 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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## Twentieth Meeting

Geneva, 21–25 November 2022

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of requests 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 Ecuador

1. Ecuador commenced the process of humanitarian demining in the border areas with Peru after the signing of the Peace Agreements of Brasilia on 28 October 1998, which put an end to the border disputes with that country.
2. Ecuador signed the Convention on 4 December 1997 and ratified it on 29 April 1999. It entered into force for the country on 1 October 1999.
3. In September 1999, the Government of Ecuador, demonstrating its political will to definitively eradicate anti-personnel mines from its territory, established the National Centre for Humanitarian Demining of Ecuador, a body chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and on which the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence and the Army Corps of Engineers are also represented. The “Cotopaxi” Sixty-eighth Engineers Battalion is the unit responsible for the clearance of areas contaminated by anti-personnel mines and the destruction and deactivation of hazardous explosive devices throughout the country.
4. Humanitarian demining operations have been carried out since 2000 in the Provinces of El Oro, Loja, Morona Santiago, Pastaza and Zamora Chinchipe.
5. In March 2008, in accordance with Article 5 (1) of the Convention, Ecuador submitted a request for an extension, for a period of eight years, for the completion of humanitarian demining. An extension was granted until October 2017.
6. In March 2017, Ecuador submitted a request for the renewal of the extension until December 2022, which was approved at the sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held in Vienna from 18 to 21 December 2017.
7. In compliance with commitments made under the Convention, humanitarian demining activities were carried out in Ecuadorian territory as planned in 2018 and 2019; however, due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) health emergency and consequent financial crisis, the demining operations initially planned for 2020 and 2021 could not be carried out and were postponed.
8. There are still 53 hazardous areas pending release along the land border with Peru. In these areas, which have a total area of 40,056.00 m<sup>2</sup>, the destruction of 2,941 anti-personnel



mines will be required. Ecuador has conducted several non-technical surveys of these areas and determined that demining them will take three years, given that:

(a) The areas to demine are located in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe, in the Cordillera del Cóndor – a remote, mountainous area of dense vegetation, cliffs and ravines. This sector is situated at up to 2,400 metres above sea level, it rains nearly year round, the temperatures range from 12°C to 35°C and the humidity is constant. The only access is by air, which also hinders demining operations;

(b) In the demining operations envisaged in the request for an extension, the only demining technique that will be used, for the stated reasons, is manual mine clearance, which implies slower progress. In previous years, mine clearance was both manual and mechanical, with the latter involving the use of a DOK-ING MV4 robot to clear a larger area and destroy more mines. However, in view of the terrain (thickly forested mountains with cliffs and ravines), it is impossible to apply this additional technique to improve the results of clearance efforts.

9. The quality control process is pending in 94 hazardous areas, measuring 220,524.95 m<sup>2</sup>, located in the Provinces of Morona Santiago, Pastaza and Zamora Chinchipe.

10. In view of the budgetary restrictions on demining operations in Ecuador due to the COVID-19 health emergency, and the rough terrain and unfavourable weather conditions of the areas to be cleared, it is not possible for Ecuador to complete the eradication of anti-personnel mines on its territory before 31 December 2022.

11. Since the beginning of operations in 2000, Ecuador has managed to release 551,741.56 m<sup>2</sup> of land and has destroyed 12,193 anti-personnel mines, 74 anti-tank mines and 35 items of unexploded ordnance.

12. During the extension period from 2018 to 2022, Ecuador has made the necessary efforts to comply with its obligations under the Convention, releasing 37,756.79 m<sup>2</sup> of land and destroying 309 anti-personnel mines.

13. Moreover, in 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and the Ministry of Defence agreed to establish the Humanitarian Demining Certification Unit, which is responsible for the quality control and subsequent certification of cleared land. In the same year, the Unit conducted internal and external quality control of released areas in the Provinces of El Oro and Loja, with the following results:

(i) In El Oro, internal quality control of areas measuring 6,427.00 m<sup>2</sup> and external quality control of areas measuring 2,174.00 m<sup>2</sup>;

(ii) In Loja, internal quality control of areas measuring 7,963.00 m<sup>2</sup> and external quality control of areas measuring 8,051.00 m<sup>2</sup>.

14. Humanitarian demining operations in 2018 and 2019 were funded from State resources allocated to a project on the release of land on the border of Ecuador and Peru contaminated by known landmines. However, in 2020 and 2021 budget cuts at the national level resulted in the channelling of these financial resources to efforts to address the global public health emergency, which severely affected Ecuador.

15. Humanitarian demining operations were due to resume in June 2022 under a project on the release of land on the border of Ecuador and Peru contaminated by known landmines or hazardous explosive devices. The project budget until 2025 is broken down as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total (US\$)</i>
2022	2 448 041.00
2023	2 353 079.06
2024	2 307 109.68
2025	2 341 290.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 449 519.80</b>

16. Nevertheless, the Ecuadorian authorities must still carry out the quality control of areas not included in the aforementioned project; funding from the international community will therefore be required to complete this process. Accordingly, humanitarian demining activities will also be carried out with the support of the Comprehensive Action against Anti-Personnel Mines Programme of the Organization of American States, once a cooperation and technical assistance agreement has been signed.

17. In the past two years, the Government of Ecuador has stepped up its efforts to secure international assistance for the completion of the humanitarian demining process in its territory. Thus, in various global and regional forums, it has called for donor countries and organizations to support this process, in accordance with the Convention.

18. With regard to cooperation between Ecuador and Peru in the area of humanitarian demining, and as an example of one of the most important confidence-building measures between the two countries, the Binational Demining Unit completed the clearance of anti-personnel mines in the area known as the Square Kilometre of Tiwinza, which is owned by Ecuador. In this context, 19,561.39 m<sup>2</sup> of land were released, and 852 anti-personnel mines were destroyed. In addition, several binational courses on humanitarian demining have been organized.

19. The hazardous areas to be demined from June 2022 are located in the Amazon rainforest of Zamora Chinchipe Province. These areas are difficult to access, contain dense vegetation, cliffs and ravines and reach altitudes of up to 2,400 metres above sea level. Access is exclusively by air, which increases the cost and significantly hinders operations. Weather conditions are another factor limiting the completion of planned operations; the climate is varied, with temperatures ranging from 12°C to 35°C, constant humidity and year-round precipitation. In the past, these factors have meant that only 45 per cent of planned operations could be completed.

20. The following hazardous areas on the border between Ecuador and Peru, in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe, are awaiting demining:

- (i) Number of hazardous areas: 53
  - (ii) Area to be released: 40,056 m<sup>2</sup>
  - (iii) Number of mines to be destroyed: 2,941
- (according to existing records)

21. The Government has drawn up a detailed plan for the inspection of remaining areas and a timeline for determining their exact location by conducting non-technical surveys and inspections to locate the reference points of suspected hazardous areas in 2023 and 2024. In this way, it expects to determine the exact location of 26 suspected hazardous areas that require demining.

*Detailed plan for the inspection of remaining areas and timeline for determining their exact location, conducting non-technical surveys and inspections to locate the reference points of suspected hazardous areas, 2023–2024*

<i>Ord.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Target ID</i>	<i>Area to be released (m<sup>2</sup>)</i>	<i>Anti-personnel mines to be destroyed</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>September</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>
1		Obst_C-26	180	17				
2		Obst_D-20	3 200.00	177				
3		Obst_D-22	525	44				
4	2023	Obst_D-24	75	14				
5		Obst_D-25	260	68				
6		Obst_D-43	150	15				
7		Obst_C-25	135	15				
8		Obst_C-28	9	3				
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>4 534.00</b>	<b>353</b>				

*Detailed plan for the inspection of remaining areas and timeline for determining their exact location, conducting non-technical surveys and inspections to locate the reference points of suspected hazardous areas, 2023–2024*

<i>Ord.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Target ID</i>	<i>Area to be released (m<sup>2</sup>)</i>	<i>Anti-personnel mines to be destroyed</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>September</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>
9		Obst_C-1	69	10				
10		Obst_C-2	45	10				
11		Obst_C-3	28	14				
12		Obst_C-4	60	19				
13		Obst_C-5	90	10				
14		Obst_C-6	165	38				
15		Obst_C-7	400	40				
16		Obst_C-8	12	5				
17	2024	Obst_C-9	90	120				
18		Obst_C-23	80	20				
19		Obst_C-27	18	15				
20		Obst_C-12	600	40				
21		Obst_C-13	600	43				
22		Obst_D-19	500	81				
23		Obst_D-23	90	4				
24		Obst_D-40	100	8				
25		Obst_D-41	30	10				
26		Obst_D-42	10	3				
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>2 987.00</b>	<b>490</b>				
<b>Total</b>			<b>7 521.00</b>	<b>843</b>				

22. In this context, the Government has identified the following confirmed and suspected hazardous areas: 27 confirmed hazardous areas, with an area of 32,535.00 m<sup>2</sup>, which must be fully cleared; and 26 suspected hazardous areas, with an area of 7,521.00 m<sup>2</sup>, which it aims to release through the cancellation or reduction procedures established in the International Mine Action Standards.

23. Ecuador still needs to carry out quality control in the following areas before the competent authorities can issue handover certificates:

- (i) Province of Morona Santiago, 94 hazardous areas totalling 220,524.94 m<sup>2</sup>;
- (ii) Province of Zamora Chinchipe, 8 hazardous areas totalling 41,186.00 m<sup>2</sup>;
- (iii) Province of Pastaza, 1 hazardous area of 1,000.00 m<sup>2</sup>.

24. It should be noted that this quality control process has to be performed in areas where humanitarian demining operations were carried out more than 12 years ago. Natural changes in the vegetation and terrain, typical of the Amazon rainforest, will severely hamper this process and considerably increase the time and resources required. The Comprehensive Action against Anti-Personnel Mines Programme was responsible for the quality control of cleared areas from 2000 until its departure from Ecuador in 2013. That process was not fully implemented and remains pending.

25. The 94 areas in Morona Santiago, measuring 220,525 m<sup>2</sup>, that require quality control for their release and handover to communities, have been fully cleared. However, the overall figure of 103 areas, measuring 262,710 m<sup>2</sup>, includes areas in Zamora Chinchipe that have not been; in other words, quality control must be carried out in these areas in order to complete all phases of the humanitarian demining process.

26. For all of the stated reasons, Ecuador, acting under Article 5 of the Convention, requests the States parties to grant it a further extension, of three years, to complete the

eradication of the anti-personnel mines on its territory. This request is consistent with the national resource planning, notably for the project on the release of land on the border of Ecuador and Peru contaminated by known landmines; any assistance that might be obtained in the framework of the agreement with the Organization of American States, or with other international organizations; and the National Humanitarian Demining Plan 2022–2025.

(ANNEX 1)

## Issuance of handover certificates

27. The certification of mine-free land requires the quality control of all mine-affected areas released since 2000 by the national demining authorities. This implies an increase in human, financial and logistical resources.

28. Quality control still has to be carried out in the Provinces of Morona Santiago, Pastaza and – once the clearance of hazardous areas is complete – Zamora Chinchipe.

29. The procedure for the issuance of handover certificates for land in the Provinces of Loja and El Oro that has been certified mine free by the Land Certification Unit is being defined at the national level. It is expected that this process will conclude in the second half of 2022.

30. To locate and determine the extent of hazardous areas near the border, trained and qualified personnel will conduct the relevant technical and non-technical surveys based on records of the country’s mined hazardous areas. Modern equipment will be used to inspect mined areas before operations.

31. In its request for an extension, the Government estimates that 40,056.00 m<sup>2</sup> of land will be cleared of mines between 2022 and 31 December 2025, in accordance with the National Humanitarian Demining Plan 2022–2025.

(ANNEX 2)

32. For the release of areas contaminated with anti-personnel mines, the following techniques will be used: “one deminer per lane” manual demining; the use of mine detection dogs (used for the quality control of cleared areas, thus increasing confidence that all procedures have been followed to clear the areas); and mechanical demining, based on the procedures laid down in the Manual of Humanitarian Demining Procedures of Ecuador and the Binational (Ecuador and Peru) Manual of Humanitarian Demining Procedures.

33. The Government states that it will allocate the budget for completing the humanitarian demining process in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe to the project on the release of land on the border of Ecuador and Peru contaminated by known landmines or hazardous explosive devices for the period 2022–2025.

(ANNEX 3)

## Risk factors that could delay the completion of the Plan

- (i) The emergence of new COVID-19 variants harmful to public health and the economy, or other public health emergencies;
- (ii) Natural disasters, such as the earthquake that occurred on 16 April 2016. Ecuador is located in a high-risk seismic zone;
- (iii) Adverse weather conditions inherent to the rainforest environment;
- (iv) Difficulties accessing the remaining hazardous areas, which are characterized by dense vegetation, cliffs and ravines, are situated up to 2,400 metres above sea level and can be reached only by air, which increases the cost of and significantly hinders operations;
- (v) The detection of unregistered hazardous areas during the humanitarian demining process;

(vi) The existence of hazardous areas whose geographical location is not well defined, which could delay locating them;

(vii) Events with global repercussions.

34. The humanitarian demining operations will require more and better equipment for deminers, incorporating the latest technological advances in personal protection. This is due to the age of the existing equipment and the fact that it degrades more quickly in the climate and terrain of the Amazon rainforest than in other conditions.

35. Therefore, Ecuador undertakes to:

(i) Purchase new personal protective equipment;

(ii) Purchase the latest-generation search and detection equipment;

(iii) Improve the skills of demining personnel through training in the use of new demining techniques and technologies.

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