



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION
INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS OF THE STATES PARTIES
UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION**

18-20 June 2024

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 Intersessional Meetings of the States Parties and congratulate and commend the Kingdom of Cambodia on their able Presidency.

Furthermore, we would like to use this opportunity to thank the ISU, Director Juan Carlos Ruan, Gregory and the whole team 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.

However, due to the fact that Serbia has been facing a number of difficulties, in March 2024, Serbia submitted a fourth request for an extension of the deadline for fulfilling of its mine clearance obligations under the Convention for a period of 2-years until 31 December 2026.

There are a number of circumstances that have impeded Serbia from complying with its period of third extension request. Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

- Unregistered mine contaminated areas: the remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.
- Newly discovered mine suspected areas in Bujanovac, in October 2019 and in August 2021.
- Climactic conditions: contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays.
- Contamination other than mines: clearance of areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, as well as residual contamination and clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.
- Pending of implementation of non-technical survey project of Bujanovac municipality for which Serbia requested previous extension request in order to gather necessary information to design a workplan and project with greater certainty the amount of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that will be

required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations. A contractor has been selected and the project was expected to commence in 2023, however, due to certain security concerns, relevant Serbian authorities estimated that the commencement of the field operations should be delayed. Circumstances have changed and SMAC expects this project to commence in the coming months.

As of June 2024, in the Republic of Serbia the area suspected to contain groups of anti-personnel mines totals 268,100 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac, plus newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality.

In the period Dec 2023 - Feb 2024, one technical survey project by the SMAC was implemented in the Municipality of Bujanovac, total area of 122.200 sqm. The funds for the project were provided by the Serbian Government from the 2023 national funds which were matched, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, by the Republic of Korea and the U.S. donations.

The Serbian Government has allocated around 260.000 EUR for demining operations in 2024. These funds have been transferred to ITF to match the funds with donor funds (the US and the Republic of Korea donations). SMAC developed projects for the remaining known contamination totalling 268,100 sqm, which will be implemented in 2024, in addition to non-technical survey project covering previously unknown contamination, which is also planned to be implemented in 2024.

Serbia is requesting extension of the deadline under Article 5 until 31 December 2026. This would provide the possibility to complete non-technical survey of newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality, which will take up to 1 year and will focus on the areas where fire forests occurred and explosions could be heard. By then, Serbia will get a clear picture of the remaining mine contamination and development of a detailed plan containing SHA and CHA will be enabled.

SMAC has provided donor funds to start a non-technical survey project, that will include 2 mixed survey teams (1 Serbian and 1 Albanian team of 2 surveyors each), which will be fully trained and equipped to conduct required tasks. These activities will be supervised and monitored by SMAC and in cooperation with the local authorities.

Simultaneously with survey activities, MRE activities will be conducted in all 59 villages of the Municipality of Bujanovac.

MRE activities will be conducted in Bujanovac schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The target group is the most vulnerable population - children, girls and boys, but also women and men.

The mine risk education will be carried out by SMAC and non-technical survey teams.

Financial resources are expected to be covered by non-technical survey project developed by SMAC.

Mine suspected area has been marked in order to clearly and visually warn of mine danger, as well as to ban the entry of population into mine suspected area. Mine warning signs have been posted in the areas of possible access to mined areas (roads, paths and other areas where movement of people is expected).

Given that the population is multi-ethnic, the wording on the signs has been written in Serbian and Albanian.

On another note, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the following achievements:

In 2024, SMAC is continuing its work on implementation of IMSMA Core and establishment of a centralized database aimed at improving data quality, accessibility, and sharing at SMAC and with external stakeholders, as well as bringing informed decisions when it comes to prioritization and planning of activities. In early 2024, the work was focused on data migration and data cleaning, resulting in IMSMA Core Version 1 being presented to the SMAC.

In SMAC Innovation and Educational Park, located on the outskirts of Belgrade, SMAC in collaboration with the UK based DRAGON Group have been providing IMAS EOD training courses. So far, 4 EOD courses have been delivered, with trainees both national (Serbian mine action authorities) and international (UK, Ireland, Jordan, Sri Lanka, Somalia, France, Netherlands, Cambodia, Mali, Zimbabwe, etc.)

SMAC is also participating in NPA Project *Enhancing Quality Management Systems of National Mine Action Authorities and Centers in Western Balkans*, within which 3 chapters land release, glossary and quality management, have been developed in late 2023.

In early June 2024, SMAC and the UK based Intelligence-Sec Limited, organized the Explosive Ordnance Seminar Europe conference and exhibition in Belgrade. The event brought together leading government officials from across Europe, Middle East and North America to discuss the latest EOD operations, capabilities and challenges. As well as current projects being conducted in the region by the mine action centres; current technologies used to assist EOD and IEDD operatives and humanitarian demining support and operations overseas.

Significant results have been achieved in the field of humanitarian demining 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, Republic of Korea, Japan, Germany, Norway, Canada, Czech Republic, Spain, Switzerland, EU, France and ITF Enhancing Human Security.

We expect to continue our joint engagement until the complete demining of Serbia.

SMAC, as a national mine action coordinating authority, has requested from the Serbian Government to continue to allocate funds in the years to follow. However, international support is needed and Serbia, in its final phase, appeals to donors to be part of the completion process.

In conclusion, as a member of the States Parties, despite all the unfavorable circumstances, 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 and ultimately achieving the noble goal of a mine-free and victim-free world.

Thank you for your attention.



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
SERBIAN MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**PRESENTATION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
REQUEST FOR EXTENSION**

ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS OF THE STATES PARTIES

18-20 JUNE 2024



Summary of SERBIA Extension Request

- Current deadline: December 31, 2024
- Request for extension for a period of 2 years until December 31, 2026

Contamination in total (at entry into force or at the time of submission of SERBIA last extension request)	3 areas 561,800 m ² + Newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality
Progress made	2 areas released 293,700 square meters None cancelled through non-technical survey 122,200 m ² reduced through technical survey 171,500 m ² released through clearance 0 Anti-Personnel Mines destroyed 5 other devices destroyed
Remaining challenge	6 suspected hazardous areas in the Bujanovac Municipality



Rationale for requesting an extension

- What are the circumstances that impede the ability of your State to fulfil its mine clearance obligations under Article 5 as originally planned?

There are a number of circumstances that have impeded Serbia from complying with its period of third extension request. Particular issues faced by Serbia are as follows:

Unregistered mine contaminated areas: the remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and have not been planted in specific patterns, which aggravates demining efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

Newly discovered mine suspected areas in Bujanovac, in October 2019 and in August 2021.

Climactic conditions: contaminated areas are inaccessible during some periods of the year causing operation delays.

Contamination other than mines: clearance of areas contaminated with unexploded cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, as well as residual contamination and clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.

Pending of implementation of non-technical survey project of Bujanovac municipality for which Serbia requested previous extension request in order to gather necessary information to design a workplan and project with greater certainty the amount of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that will be required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations. A contractor has been selected and the project was expected to commence in 2023, however, due to certain security concerns, relevant Serbian authorities estimated that the commencement of the field operations should be delayed. Circumstances have changed and SMAC expects this project to commence in the coming months.



Rationale for requesting an extension

- What is the rationale for the amount of time requested, (including risks and assumptions of the plan?)

The Republic of Serbia will put maximum effort into clearing known areas totalling 268,100 square metres in 2024.

National and international funds for 2024 clearance operations have been secured.

During the period of the request, Serbia is projecting that it will need 18 months to recruit survey teams, complete non-technical survey and analyse all data in order to develop a forward-looking work plan. Serbia will aim to submit by 31 March 2026 a request, including a work plan for completing its Article 5 obligations.

If the funds for demining operations are provided, namely if international funding is made available for clearance of anti-personnel mines, national funding continues to flow for the implementation of the programme and no additional mine areas are discovered ahead of completion. Serbia intends, by the use of methods such as cancelation and reduction through non-technical and technical survey, manual demining, mechanical demining (where applicable) to complete clearance in Serbia well before their deadline in the situation when security concerns do not continue to impact on the access and deployment of survey teams to the areas.

Please see the March 2024 Extension Request submitted by Serbia for more details



Remaining challenge

Google Map of Bujanovac Municipality with suspected hazardous areas and newly identified suspected hazardous areas (shown in white). Please note that these white polygons shown on the map represent a rough illustration of the sites where fire forest broke out and explosions could be heard. No survey has yet taken place.



The starting areas for non-technical survey that will include all of Bujanovac Municipality are:

- Area of 1,777,367 m² - in the area of the village Djordjevac, which borders on the north side with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0240/20 and with the Project for technical survey of the "Bujanovac North" site, number 0193-4/17.
- Area of 156,125 m² - between the villages of Veliki Trnovac and Končulj, which on the south side borders with the Project "Turijsko brdo 1" 0134/12, and on the north side with the Project "Končulj – Transmission Line 1 and 2", number 0240/21.
- Area of 1,317,575 m² - located in the area of the village of Končulj, between the villages Končulj and Dobrosin, which is bordered on the north by the Project "Končulj Singerit" 0209/18.
- Area of 830,383 m² - located between the villages of Lučane and Dobrosin, which on the north side borders with the Projects "Dobrosin" 0199/18, "Dobrosin 1" 0245/21, and on the west and east side borders with the Project for Integrated Approach to Mine Risk Land Release 0179/15.
- Area of 286,193 m² in the village of Nesalce, located west of the Nesalce village, on the local road to the village of Vrban.



Plan / Timeline

- If relevant, indicate what survey / activities will take place to identify the precise perimeter of mined areas.

NTS project developed by SMAC will include 2 mixed survey teams (1 Serbian and 1 Albanian team of 2 surveyors each), which will be fully trained and equipped to conduct required tasks. These activities will be supervised and monitored by SMAC and in cooperation with the local authorities.

NTS Team will work in 6 areas and MRE activities will be conducted in all villages of the Bujanovac Municipality, and if during MRE activities, additional indicators are found, the NTS will be extended to these areas as well.

MRE activities will be conducted in Bujanovac schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The target group is the most vulnerable population - children, girls and boys, but also women and men.

The mine risk education will be carried out by SMAC and non-technical survey teams.

Financial resources are expected to be covered by non-technical survey project developed by SMAC

- Highlight what the plan / timeline is for addressing the remaining challenge

Projects for Technical Survey developed for known areas (268,100 sqm) will be carried out in 2024 -2025

Non-technical Survey project for newly identified SHA developed and will be carried out in 2024-2026

Please see the March 2024 Extension Request submitted by Serbia for more details



Challenges and Needs

- **We expect the Serbian Government will continue to allocate the funds for demining operations throughout the requested extension period. According to some rough estimations, in addition to funds from national budget (780,000 EUR), Serbia will need around 1,500,000 EUR in resource mobilised from international donors.**

Regarding NATIONAL funding, in 2024, Serbian Government allocated 260,000 EUR. However, 2025 and 2026 are still pending.

Regarding INTERNATIONAL funding, in 2024, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, donations confirmed by the US and the Republic of Korea. Similarly to national funding, 2025 and 2026 international funding are still pending.

SMAC, as a national mine action coordinating authority, has requested from the Serbian Government to continue to allocate funds in the years to follow. However, international support is needed and Serbia, in its final phase, appeals to donors to be part of the completion process.

In conclusion, as a member of the States Parties, despite all the unfavorable circumstances, 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 and ultimately achieving the noble *goal of a mine-free and victim-free world.*