
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

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 Mauritania

1. The contamination of northern Mauritania by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) is due to its involvement in the Western Sahara conflict of 1976-1978, which was marked by the use of a significant number of mines, generally without any laying plan. Forty-four years after the war, mines continue to kill and injure the population. They also constitute a barrier to development in northern Mauritania, blocking economic activities such as grazing, mining research, fishing, tourism and trade.
2. Mauritania ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on 21 July 2000 and the Convention entered into force for Mauritania on 1 January 2001.
3. In 2000, the National Humanitarian Demining Program for Development (PNDHD) was created. The PNDHD is a government institution under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization. It is monitored by an inter-ministerial steering committee. This entity is the body responsible for the implementation of the Convention and therefore coordinates all actions in this area.
4. After 22 years of entry into force and in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention, Mauritania has made progress in conducting demining operations to release previously contaminated areas. During this period, thanks to the support of the international community, in particular Norway, an overall area of 130,698,425 square metres was released with the identification and destruction of 8,080 anti-personnel mines, 891 anti-tank mines, and 15,119 unexploded ordnance (UXO).
5. After submitting a series of extensions, Mauritania initially declared the fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations under the Convention in November 2018. In June 2020, Mauritania submitted a request to extend its Article 5 deadline by one year having recently found two previously unknown minefields under its jurisdiction or control on the Nouadibou peninsula, in northern Mauritania.
6. In February and March 2021, after a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an initial assessment was conducted by the PNDHD with support of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). The objective of this assessment was to assist the PNDHD to put together a more accurate estimate of the remaining contamination in the country. These areas include both the newly identified mine contaminated areas documented in 2019, and areas redefined and considered

* This document is submitted late due to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



to be under its jurisdiction or control located on the Nouadibou peninsula. The assessment mission identified a total of 20 mined areas measuring 16,183,490 square metres, with the majority of these areas located in the Nouadibou region.

7. The remaining mined areas in Mauritania have a significant impact on the population. The impact of landmines, cluster munitions and ERW contamination in Mauritania is predominantly social and economic, blocking access to pasture and other community resources and occasionally killing livestock. Human accidents also continue to occur, with a number of injuries occurring between 2009- 2021. The majority of land when released is used for pasture by nomads and semi-nomadic communities.

8. 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 PNDHD recorded six victims of mine and explosive device accidents since 2018.

9. Mauritania has conducted mine risk education to change the behaviour of populations in high-risk areas. Several awareness campaigns have been organised and the inclusion of this component in school programs has been remarkably effective. The creation of the material takes into consideration gender and the diverse needs of mine-affected communities. The current plan is to strengthen these efforts around the newly identified mined areas.

10. Based on the assessment carried out, Mauritania is requesting an extension for a period of 5 years until 31 December 2026 to address remaining contamination.

11. During the course of the extension period, Mauritania will carry out the following activities, amongst others:

- i. Build the capacity of the PNHD (e.g. personnel training, capacity development of team leaders, capacity development of deminers and other staff);
- ii. Carry out non-technical and technical survey in affected areas to further delimit the mined areas;
- iii. Ensure maintenance of the national database;
- iv. Carry out context-specific mine risk education campaigns keeping in mind the commitments of the Oslo Action Plan;
- 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.

12. It is estimated that an initial period of six months in 2021 will be needed to complete the mobilization process. This includes the identification of funding, staffing, equipment and other resources needed in order to deploy eight mine clearance teams to address the remaining amount of contamination. 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.

13. Clearance time estimates are based on estimated area size, level of contamination expected, and past experience working in similar areas. These estimates are subject to change based on further survey work. Timeline calculations are based on a total of 8 working teams, working 250 days a year, each team clearing 250 square metres a day.

14. In line with the recommendations from the assessment mission the PNDHD will: (a) train new civilian staff rather than deploying military engineers to conduct survey and clearance operations, (b) train and deploy three non-technical survey (NTS)/technical survey (TS) teams to accurately define the extent of contaminated areas prior to commencing clearance, (c) following sufficient NTS/TS, train and deploy eight clearance teams in Nouadibou, (d) consider the use of Mine Detection Dogs (MDD) in Nouadibou where the presence of conventionally undetectable and/or deep buried mines exists, (e) 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.

15. 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
16. And the following assumptions:
- i. Current estimates of contamination remain the same (no or limited additional areas are identified during further survey and clearance work)
 - ii. Development of national capacity to deal with any additional / future identified residual risk.
17. Currently the only financial support provided to the mine action programme comes from the Government of Mauritania.
18. Mauritania is seeking the support of the international community to complete its Article 5 obligations and is looking to partner with willing donor governments and international mine action non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which would be ready to assist the country with its progress towards completion.
19. In order to complete the survey and clearance work of the initially identified mine contaminated areas in the timeframe outlined, an initial investment of 650,000 USD would be needed for equipment and then an additional 1.8 million per year for staff and other running costs for a period of five years. The government of Mauritania and the PNDHD would be seeking to fundraise this amount with the assistance of the international mine action community.
20. The government of Mauritania will contribute local staff to work on the project. The staff of the PNDHD will all work to support this initiative, and office space is also provided. The PNDHD will be responsible to facilitate the smooth implementation of this project including the liaison work with national and local governmental and military officials.
21. Mauritania will take initial steps to mobilize resources for its humanitarian mine clearance programme, including the following:
- i. Mauritania, with the support of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance and the ISU, will participate in the Individualised Approach;
 - ii. Mauritania, will present its request for extension at the 22-24 June 2021 Intersessional Meetings, providing information on the gaps for implementation
 - iii. Mauritania will continue outreach to international partners and States parties in a position to provide assistance to support Mauritanian's humanitarian demining programme;
 - iv. Mauritania will reach out partners with representation in Mauritania and invite them to participate in a briefing on Mauritania's humanitarian demining programme;
 - v. Mauritania will continue providing information on the status of implementation through its national website and country page on the Convention's website;
 - vi. Mauritania will continue to provide updates on implementation at informal and formal meetings of the Convention as well through its Article 7 Report.