

REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR COMPLETING THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PER- SONNEL MINES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Submitted by Eritrea

1. Eritrea acceded to the Convention on 27 August 2001, and the Convention entered into force for Eritrea on 1 February 2002. In its initial transparency report submitted on 3 September 2003, Eritrea reported areas under its jurisdiction or control containing, or suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines. This contamination by anti-personnel mines in Eritrea was a result of major armed conflicts in the last century. The conflicts waged over the last several decades have left a massive legacy of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of war (ERW) making Eritrea one of the countries in the world hardest hit by this scourge. During the Second World War the British and Italian armies fought in Eritrea leaving behind a significant amount of unexploded ordnance (UXO). After the British victory in the Horn of Africa, the United Nations decided in 1952 to make Eritrea an autonomous entity federated with Ethiopia against the will of the people. Ethiopia subsequently annexed Eritrea in 1962, which sparked a struggle for independence that lasted 30 years since 1961 and culminated in Eritrea's formal independence in 1993 by a referendum. The conflict resulted in considerable landmines and UXO contamination and the laying of numerous non-conventional hazardous ordnances in areas near military camps, roads, battle zones, strongholds of cities and populated areas, farmland and water resources. In 1998 a border conflict characterized by trench warfare broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia resulting in a two-year war and the laying of defensive minefields by both armies along above 1,000 Km border.
2. As per the Convention, Eritrea was obliged to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control by 1 February 2012. Eritrea, believing that it would be unable to do so by that date, submitted on 31 March 2011 to the President of the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties (10MSP), a request for an extension of its deadline. The Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties (11MSP) agreed unanimously to grant the request until 1 February 2015.
3. During this initial extension period, progress was made in addressing 287 mined areas measuring 73,702,463 square meters through clearance and cancellation by non-technical survey. Out of these 287 mined areas, 157 mined areas measuring a total of 33.5 million square meters were addressed in 2013 almost entirely through the application of non-technical survey methodologies. Despite this progress, 49 previously unknown mined areas were discovered in the five regions of the country measuring approximately 9 million square meters.
4. On 23 January 2014 Eritrea submitted to the President of the Thirteenth Meeting of the States Parties (13MSP) a request for extension of its 1 February 2015 deadline. The request was granted at the Third Review Conference and a new deadline set for 1 February 2020. As mentioned in Eritrea's request, the remaining contamination at this time amounted to 434 mined areas measuring 33'432'811 square meters in the regions of Gash Barka, Anseba, Central, Southern, Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea.
5. The aim of the last extension request was to gain clarity through survey and clearance operation in order to report on the remaining areas know to contain mines by the end of this extension period and present a plan for completion.
6. Since this time Eritrea has faced many of the negative circumstances highlighted in its previous request which has made progress difficult including the fact that demining teams have been diverted to other crucial and outstanding government development programs such as in construction and agricultural projects and

the fact that teams have faced financial and material shortfalls making it extremely difficult for Eritrea to carry out operations without external assistance. While Eritrea has the necessary experience and expertise to address the challenges, it will require support from the international community for the successful execution of survey and clearance operations in the remaining affected areas.

7. Furthermore, a process of restructuring the Eritrean Demining Authority was launched to ensure it is best placed to tackle the remaining challenge. This has presented obstacles for the submission by Eritrea of its request containing detailed data on the progress made to date as well as the presentation of a work plan for the period beyond Eritrea's deadline of 1 February 2020.
8. Eritrea is fully aware of its commitments under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and fully intends to comply with its obligations under Article 5. This is a priority of our state as we highlighted in our previous extension request given the negative socio-economic impact on Eritrea as well as the significant benefits to be drawn from completing our work in this regard.
9. Eritrea is also committed to the process established by the States Parties for the submission and consideration of requests for extension as adopted by the Seventh Meeting of the States Parties. In this regard, Eritrea submits to the States Parties a request for extension of its deadline until 31 December 2020 which would allow Eritrea the opportunity to present a detailed request including detailed information on its current contamination, progress made and a detailed work plan for implementation by 31 March 2020.
10. Eritrea is currently in close contact with the Committee on Article 5 Implementation as well as with the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention to support the drafting of a more detailed request for extension to be submitted in 2020.