



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

FOURTH REVIEW CONFERENCE

UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

Oslo, 25-29 November 2019

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 Fourth Review Conference and congratulate and commend Norway on their able Presidency.

Furthermore, we would like to use this opportunity to underline that the Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to the full implementation of its obligations from the Anti - Personnel 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.

With regards to Serbia's Article 5 Implementation obligations, please note that Serbia is also committed to the fulfilment of its obligations.

The Republic of Serbia deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention is 1 March 2023.

The remaining areas contaminated by mines do not have registries and had not been planted in specific patterns.

These are groups of mines, not minefields. On most of these areas deaths of humans or animals occurred or a mine was accidentally detected.

All these circumstances aggravate survey and clearance efforts, namely survey results are subject to alterations.

In 2019, the Government of Serbia has increased funds for demining operations to 350,000 EUR in comparison to 2015 when the available funds totalled 100,000 EUR, thus demonstrating that it has taken more ownership of the problem.

Since the Intersessional Meeting held in May 2019, three clearance projects totaling 606,200 sqm were completed in June - November 2019 in the Municipality of Bujanovac, with 22 AP mines and 14 UXO found and safely destroyed.

One of these projects was funded by the 2019 Serbian State Budget for demining operations and, matched, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, with the U.S. donation and the donation of the Republic of Korea.

One project was funded by Japan through ITF. This is the first time Japanese Government has earmarked funds for demining operations in Serbia. We would like to extend our sincere

gratitude and appreciation and are looking forward to continuation of our cooperation until the achievement of all set goals.

One project which comprised mine clearance of the part of transmission line route in Bujanovac was funded by Joint Stock Company "Elektromreža Srbije" - Transmission System Maintenance Division, Belgrade. Demining of the site increased the safety of people, facilitated the regular maintenance of transmission lines, which are part of the transmission system and are important for the security of power supply in the southern part of Serbia.

As of November 2019, the area in the Republic of Serbia suspected to contain anti-personnel mines totals 1,125,310 square metres. The area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines remains in the Municipality of Bujanovac.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has allocated 350.000 EUR for demining operations in 2020. We will try to match these funds with the available donor funds.

The SMAC has prepared two demining projects, total area of around 600.000 m², and one technical survey project totalling 390.300 m², which will, hopefully, be implemented in 2020 pending on available donor funds.

However, we would like to use this opportunity to draw attention to the fact that the Republic of Serbia is facing with a problem of newly discovered mine suspected areas in the Bujanovac Municipality.

In the period 2-3 October 2019, in the territory of the Municipality of Bujanovac (villages of Veliki Trnovac, Končulj, Lučane, Ravno Bučje, Đorđevac), at the request of representatives of local self-government, the Mine Action Center of the Republic of Serbia conducted survey and marking of locations suspected to be contaminated by groups of mines. These are locations where fires occurred recently, and according to eyewitnesses, explosions could be heard in several places after the fire broke out, indicating the existence of mines in these areas.

Representatives of the Serbian Mine Action Center and Emergency Management Staff of the Municipality of Bujanovac, visited the sites and interviewed local residents, local community representatives, firefighters, as well as police and military representatives.

The mine incident questionnaires have been completed in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

Furthermore, 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.

In the forthcoming period, Serbian Mine Action Center intends to survey the remaining sites for which there are indications of contamination. The aim is to record all changes that have occurred as a result of new circumstances and are the consequences of new findings.

In addition, in the previous months, the Serbian Mine Action Centre engaged itself in mine risk awareness activities in the Bujanovac Municipality, organizing a lecture on mines and explosive remnants of war for the local authorities, public companies and institutions founded by the Municipality of Bujanovac, relevant institutions for protection and rescue (Red Cross Bujanovac, Forest Section, Veterinary Station Bujanovac, Hunting Association), Presidents of Local Communities - Commissioners of Civil Protection, aimed at raising awareness of

dangers posed by mines and ERW and for establishing liaison with community and encouraging locals to report on mine suspected areas.

The Republic of Serbia will make all their efforts to complete the Article 5 obligations, in order to primarily provide safety of local population, safe exploitation of woods, safe use of road communications, environmental protection, as well as reduction of fire risks.

Serbia is making efforts to solve the problems related to mines and other explosive remnants of war and the Government, within its modest possibilities, allocates funds for demining operations, but given the extent of the problem of mines and other explosive remnants of war, this is not enough to solve the overall mine problem. Namely, in addition to mine contaminated areas, Serbia has been facing with the presence of the areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs-rockets and other UXO.

Therefore, Serbia needs international funds and time to complete the task at hand. The dynamics of implementation of our demining projects might be affected by provision of funds, that is, if the funds for implementation of our projects are not provided, our plan will be directly affected and more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, if funds are provided, the work plan could be implemented in a shorter period.

A a member of the States Parties, the Republic of 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 by 2023.

Thank you for your attention.