

# Fourth Review Conference 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 11 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of submissions of States Parties as provided for in 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 Tajikistan**

1. Tajikistan ratified the Convention on 12 October 1999, and the Convention entered into force on 1 April 2000.
2. Landmine and explosive remnant of war (ERW) contamination in Tajikistan is the result of several years of internal and external conflicts. Landmine contamination lies along the Tajik-Afghan Border (TAB) and in the Central Region (CR) of the country. Russian forces used landmines on the Tajik-Afghan border during the period of 1992-1998 to protect the border and their border posts from extremist groups attempting to enter Tajikistan from Afghanistan. Protection of the TAB was handed over from Russian Border Forces to Tajik Border Forces in 2006. The Central Region was contaminated by landmines, remnants of cluster bomb submunitions and other ERW during the 1992-1997 civil war.
3. In terms of humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications landmines continue to create obstacles for the development of Tajikistan. An estimated 456,790 people live in or near mine contaminated areas, 70 percent of which were women and children, with more than 80 towns and villages directly exposed to mine threats. Those at highest risk of mine injury are the rural poor, foraging for firewood, food, herding cattle, or tilling their fields. According to the national victim database, 870 landmine/ERW victims (523 survivors, 347 fatalities) have been recorded from 1992 until December 2018.
4. On 4 December 2008, Tajikistan submitted a request to extend its mine clearance deadline. The request was considered at the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties and a new deadline granted of 1 April 2020.
5. At the beginning of the first extension request Tajikistan estimated a remaining challenge of 565 mined areas measuring 15,190,631 square metres based on desktop assessment of existing minefield records and non-technical survey (NTS). The assessment projected that Tajikistan's remaining challenge to be addressed through the following methodologies; 20% cancelled/reduced through non-technical and technical survey (TS), 30% reduced through mechanical survey, 20% reduced by mine detection dogs, and 50% cleared through manual clearance.
6. During the period of the extension, Tajikistan achieved the following:

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- Released 17,565,639 square metres, (124% against the target);
- 44% cancelled/reduced through survey (cancellation 21% + reduction 23%), 23% reduced through mechanical survey, 16% mine detection dogs, and 40% cleared by manual clearance
- Identified and destroyed 58,997 AP mines; 319 items of UXO ERW, 19.4 kg of explosive charges;
- Confirmed 7 districts defined as mine-free districts;
- Destroyed 405 landmines, 29,5 kg of TNT, 17 123 UXO and clusters through a weapon and ammunition disposal project.

7. During the last 4 years Tajikistan has increased its focus on reduction and cancellation during land release operations. In 2017, the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC) presented to implementing partners a new approach, 'non-technical survey with technical intervention'. The purpose of this methodology was to improve the collection of evidence in suspect hazardous areas. The results of implementing this method are given below:

- 366,000 square metres cancelled;
- Updated national standards for non-technical survey, technical survey, and quality control, in line with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), modified to the country context;
- Ratification of the Law on Humanitarian Demining, (23 July 2016). The Law determines the legal and organizational framework for humanitarian mine action and is aimed at regulation of relation related to this activity;
- 4,500 mine warning bill boards have been erected near known hazard areas;
- An estimated 250,000 persons have undergone mine risk education since the Convention's entry into force;
- US \$47.5 million has been invested in humanitarian demining activities in Tajikistan. With Tajikistan obtaining more than US \$43 million from international donors.

8. Despite these successes, there were a number of circumstances that impeded compliance during the first extension period. The main reason of the new extension request is the identification of 10,485,815 square metres of suspected hazardous during land release activities. Tajikistan border troops could not ensure TNMAC employees safety during demining operations in areas near the Afghan border for the period, 2015-17. In addition, the unstable situation on the Tajik-Afghan border prevented the use of mechanical mine assets from 2015 to 2017.

9. The main impact of humanitarian mine action is a reduction in the risk of mines and UXO affecting the civilian population, increased areas for income generation and improved safety of road infrastructure. During the previous extension period 120,000 people gained access to cleared land, with 36% of cleared land used as pasture, and 12% for crop production. The seasonal availability of pasture might lead to improvement in livestock productivity and better food consumption pattern for some households possessing livestock. Other post clearance activities include: road reconstruction, disaster mitigation activities, water infrastructure, cross-border trade, fishery reservoirs, construction of transmission/communication lines, coal/gold mining activities and maintenance of dams along the rivers.

10. As of December 2018, Tajikistan's has a remaining challenge of 249 hazardous areas measuring 12,098,210 square metres. The challenge is located in three regions: the Tajikistan – Afghanistan border, Tajikistan - Uzbekistan border and the Central Region.

11. In line with Article 5.6, Tajikistan requests a second extension for the implementation of the Convention for the period of 5 years and 8 months, 1 April 2020 - 31 December 2025.

12. Tajikistan has a remaining challenge of 249 hazardous areas measuring 12,098,210 square metres, consisting of:

- 154 confirmed hazardous areas in Central Region, Tajik-Afghan Border measuring 7,907,210 square metres;
- 41 suspect hazardous areas in Central Region, Tajik-Afghan Border measuring 941,000 square metres;
- 54 suspected hazard areas on Tajik-Uzbek border measuring an estimated 3,250,000 square metres.

13. During this extension period Tajikistan projects to address 195 mined areas measuring 8,848,210 square metres in central and Tajik-Afghan regions.

14. The rationale for addressing 8,848,210 square metres of the estimated 12,098,210 square metres in the extension period requested is due to the exclusion of 54 SHA estimated to measure 3,250,000 square metres on the Tajik-Uzbek border. Between 2011- 2015, Tajikistan conducted NTS activities in six districts on the Tajik side of the border. Tajikistan will continue to progress towards an agreement with Uzbekistan and will provide updates on progress in Article 7 reports and in annual work plans, including updated work plans to the States Parties.

15. Tajikistan will address an annual average of 1,300,000 square metres through clearance, with annual milestones for the period of the extension request as follows: 1,388,819 square metres in 2020, 1,218,722 square metres in 2021, 1,284,655 square metres in 2022, 1,277,666 square metres in 2023, 1,138,919 square metres in 2024, 1,170,000 square metres in 2025. In order to achieve these outputs, Tajikistan plans to increase demining capacity from 90 to 180 deminers.

16. In conjunction with Government of Tajikistan and the Border Forces, TNMAC will prioritize land release activities using a district-by-district approach based on the following criteria:

- Mined areas with economic and infrastructure impact, (agriculture lands, pastures, rice plantations, reconstruction and strengthening of river banks) receive top-priority for NTS and clearance/TS;
- NTS tasks: Number of un-surveyed minefield records in each district (larger number of minefield records (MFR) will be considered as priority to deploy NTS teams). Districts with smaller number of minefield records MFR can be surveyed by clearance teams during mine clearance operations;
- Clearance tasks: Number of mined areas in each district (smaller number will be considered as priority to deploy clearance teams to release whole district.

17. Considering historical land release methodology rates achieved between 2010-2018, TNMAC projects that the percentage of cleared and reduced areas during the second extension period will remain approximately the same as over the past 4 years. The remaining 195 hazardous areas with an estimated size 8,848,210 square metres will be cleared applying the same modality, (manual clearance, reduction TS, and cancellation NTS) based on the following land release ratio; 44% cancelled by non-technical survey (NTS), 19% reduced by technical survey (TS), 37% cleared through manual clearance.

18. Preliminary calculations suggest that the implementation of this plan will require US \$30 million. This amount is based on assumptions that the average price is estimated around US \$3.28 for demining operations per square metre. The majority of remaining SHA are in areas difficult to access, thus it will cost more expensive than the demining carried out on flat areas.