



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINE ACTION CENTRE**

**ANTI - PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION
THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE**

UPDATE ON ARTICLE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

Maputo, Mozambique 23-27 June 2014

Mr President, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Third Review Conference. We are confident that you will guide our work successfully and may I assure you of Serbia's full support.

Furthermore, allow me to thank you and your compatriots for hosting this Conference and extending us a warm welcome. My special thanks go to the Donors' Group, which under skilful assistance of GICHD and ISU, enabled Serbia's delegate to attend this important meeting, thus providing Serbia with the opportunity to present the relevant information regarding the actual status of fulfilment of its obligations under the Article 5 of the Convention.

Mr President,

The Republic of Serbia is a State Party of the Convention since 2004 and is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, which is proved by the fact that the Republic of Serbia neither produces AP mines nor possesses the stockpiles of AP mines. Namely, the stockpiles of AP mines were destroyed in 2007, well before the 1st March 2014, Serbia's original deadline established under Article 5.

The Republic of Serbia fulfils its obligations related to clearance of mine contaminated area, too. There are no more minefields in the border area with Croatia. The last mines in that area were removed on 10 November 2009, which apart from safety, ecological and economic aspects contributed to further strengthening of confidence between people and enhancement of relations between Serbia and Croatia.

In spite of the effective and visible results achieved on the issue of the clearance of minefields, the Republic of Serbia was not able to submit the national Declaration on the completion of implementation of Article 5 before the 1st of March 2014, but it requested a 5 year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, since, in December 2009, it was subsequently established that in the south of the country, Municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo, there were groups of AP and AT mines of an unknown origin and type, and Serbia was not in a position to embark upon clearance activities within an appropriate time in order to comply with the deadline.

At the 13th Meeting of the States Parties of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction, which was held in the period 2-6 December 2013, Geneva, the Republic of Serbia was granted a 5 year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention. Accordingly, Serbia should fulfil its obligations before 1 March 2019.

The Republic of Serbia is grateful for expressed understanding of the problems related to humanitarian demining in Serbia.

The Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia (SMAC), as a national coordinating body in charge of mine action activities in the Republic of Serbia, has approached the Government of the Republic of

Serbia with a request to allocate funds from the Budget reserve, which the SMAC would direct to mine clearance operations.

However, due to recent flooding that hit Serbia, scarce national capacities are even more burdened, forcing Serbia to rely heavily on the international community and donors to solve its clearance problems.

Despite being faced with numerous problems, such as non-existence of mine emplacement records and the fact that these are not classical minefields emplaced by a regular army, but the mines emplaced by paramilitary formations, the SMAC, with international assistance, succeeded to organize a survey of the area in 2010 and 2011. The assistance was provided by the Norwegian People's Aid and ITF Enhancing Human Security. It was established that in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo confirmed hazardous area totaled 1.385.215 sqm and suspected hazardous area, where the survey is to continue, totaled around 2.080.000 sqm.

In 2012, after SMAC lobbied with ITF and other donors, funds were provided for the implementation of two demining project tasks developed by the SMAC, totaling 164.019 sqm. By removing found AP mines, safety of population living in mixed national community was increased and they were enabled to safely cultivate agricultural land and exploit forest, which happens to be the main source of their income.

In 2013, despite the fact that the SMAC developed demining project tasks, there were no mine clearance operations in Serbia due to the lack of funds for the implementation of these project tasks and because, at the request of some donors, Serbia had to direct otherwise limited donor funds to clearance of cluster munitions and other UXO.

In early 2014, confirmed mine hazardous area totalled 1.221.196 sqm. The SMAC has developed project tasks for this area and is lobbying for provision of funds for their implementation.

The implementation of one project task developed by the SMAC, covering the area of 165.000 sqm in Preševo, was completed in late May 2014. The implementation of another project task developed by the SMAC, covering the area of 105.616 sqm in Preševo, is in progress. The funds have been donated, through ITF, by the US Government. The area in question is the mine contaminated area in an immediate vicinity of an elementary school attended daily by hundreds of pupils. Upon completion of this project task, the remaining confirmed mine hazardous area will total 950.580 sqm.

The results of the conducted clearance and survey of several locations enabled us to cancel certain area, so that the remaining mine suspected hazardous area, as of June 2014, totals around 1.900.000 sqm, which will be subject to further survey in order to confirm or reject suspicions of mine contamination, where priority will be given to surveying the areas which directly affect the most vulnerable population. The survey will face a number of challenges including primarily lack of mine emplacement records and difficult accessible terrain.

The dynamics of implementation of our demining project tasks is affected by provision of funds, that is if the funds for implementation of our project tasks are not provided, our plan will be directly affected and hard to achieve. On the other hand, if more funds are provided, demining could be implemented in a shorter period.

At the same time, Serbia has to deal with clearance of areas contaminated with cluster munitions, air bombs – rockets and other UXO, since they also affect population and block substantial resources and hinder implementation of development and infrastructure projects.

In addition to the above mentioned problems, Serbia has been facing another problem which resulted as a consequence of floods that have recently hit Serbia, but also the countries in the neighbourhood – Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Namely, heavy rains have caused widespread flooding that has possibly led to the shifting of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the mine contaminated areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

In order to assess the potential risk, the SMAC has conducted an urgent survey of the flooded area in the border area with the Republic of Croatia, but also of different locations in the whole territory of Serbia in order to define whether and to what extent has occurred possible shifting of UXO from the locations which are suspected to be systematically contaminated and which have been hit by heavy rains and landslides.

Emergency mine risk awareness trainings have been conducted for local population and all stakeholders engaged in flood relief.

In addition, SMAC has initiated the establishment of the regional expert team consisting of experts from SMAC, CROMAC and BHMAC in charge of a daily based intensive monitoring of the situation in the field, exchange of relevant information on possible directions of mine shifting. One joint project as an urgent response to the situation is in the process of being started – Non – Technical survey of flooded mine hazardous areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, which will define the scope of the problem, as well as the funds necessary for solving it.

Mr President,

Despite all these problems and financial restrictions resulting from economic difficulties the Republic of Serbia has been facing, we remain strongly committed to the fulfilment of our Article 5 obligations, namely to the accomplishment of a goal – mine free Serbia by 2019.

I thank you for your attention!