

# MAURITANIA



**ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JANUARY 2021**  
 (ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

## MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2016	For 2015
Problem understood	8	6
Target date for completion of mine clearance	7	4
Targeted clearance	8	8
Efficient clearance	8	8
National funding of programme	6	7
Timely clearance	5	5
Land release system in place	8	8
National mine action standards	8	8
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	7	6
<b>PERFORMANCE SCORE: GOOD</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>

## PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

After completing clearance of known anti-personnel mine contamination in 2015, Mauritania requested a second Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 extension period until 2021 to confirm whether suspected contamination along its undelimited northern border with Western Sahara was within its territory. Following technical survey, in February 2017, Mauritania confirmed that a 1km<sup>2</sup> area containing anti-personnel mines remained within its territory.

By September 2017, funding had been secured for clearance, which was expected to be completed by December 2017, with the area due to be released in early 2018. Mauritania informed Mine Action Review that survey of areas along the border had not revealed any further evidence of the presence of mines and no further dialogue with stakeholders on border clarification needed to be undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Mauritania should clear the 1km<sup>2</sup> confirmed hazardous area (CHA) by the end of 2017, the deadline which it has set for itself to complete clearance.
- Mauritania should report in detail to states parties on efforts undertaken to eliminate the suspicion of any mine contamination remaining on its territory through survey and dialogue with stakeholders about the border demarcation.
- When clearance of the last remaining mined area is completed, Mauritania should take all necessary measures to establish that it has no mined areas remaining and declare completion of its Article 5 obligations well in advance of its 2021 extension request deadline.
- Mauritania should ensure that sufficient capacity is maintained to address any residual contamination that may be discovered in the future.

## CONTAMINATION

At the end of 2016, Mauritania had identified one suspected hazardous area (SHA) with an estimated size of 1km<sup>2</sup>, in Ain Bintilli district, Tiris Zemmour region, in the far north of Mauritania. In early 2017, it confirmed that the area contained anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of 2015, Mauritania had reported it had released all known anti-personnel mine contamination, totalling 40 mined areas covering 67km<sup>2</sup>, including 18 areas with a size of 64.8km<sup>2</sup> identified prior to 2010 and a further 22 areas covering 2.3km<sup>2</sup> identified in 2012–13.<sup>3</sup> However, other contaminated areas were thought to exist close to Western Sahara, which depending on the demarcation of the border, could be inside Mauritanian territory and thus within its jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> In its request

for a second extension to its Article 5 clearance deadline, Mauritania stated that it “suspects that the security system along the border with Western Sahara, which comprises fortifications and minefields, crosses Mauritanian territory, especially since there is no natural border between the two”.<sup>5</sup>

Mauritania’s mine contamination is a legacy of the conflict over Western Sahara in 1975–78. A 2006 Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) had found a total of 65 SHAs covering 76km<sup>2</sup> and affecting 60 communities. This represented a significant overestimate of the actual mine threat. In 2010, Morocco provided detailed maps of minefields laid during the Western Sahara conflict. The minefields had been partially cleared using military procedures prior to the entry into force of the APMBC.<sup>6</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD) coordinates mine action operations in Mauritania.<sup>7</sup> Since 2007, the programme has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, with oversight from an interministerial steering committee.<sup>8</sup> The PNDHD has its headquarters in the capital, Nouakchott, and a regional mine action centre (RMAC) in Nouadhibou.

### Strategic Planning

In March 2017, Mauritania reported that a new national mine action strategic plan for 2016–20 had been developed with primary aims and targets, including verification of Mauritania’s borders and clearance of any newly identified contamination by 2020; continuing risk education and victim assistance; and maintenance of national mine clearance capacities.<sup>9</sup>

## Information Management

The national mine action database is held at the PNDHD. In March 2017, Mauritania reported that the GICHD was updating the database and installing the latest version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) software.<sup>10</sup>

## Quality Management

Mauritania also stated that the PNDHD's quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) capacity was maintained in 2016, but no activities were carried out.<sup>11</sup>

## Operators

In accordance with a 2006 decree, all clearance activities were conducted by the Army Engineer Corps operating under the PNDHD. In 2011, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) signed a memorandum of understanding with Mauritania to provide support for mine and battle area clearance (BAC) in the country. NPA subsequently worked in Mauritania both as an operator and in a capacity-building role as a technical advisor for PNDHD until the end of 2015.<sup>12</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

Mauritania reported that nationally funded technical surveys and administrative checks carried out in late 2016 and early 2017 resulted in the identification and confirmation of a mined area covering an estimated 1,000,000m<sup>2</sup> and containing both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines in Sebkhath Fogra, Ain Bintilli district.<sup>13</sup> It stated that the investigations undertaken had confirmed that the area was located within Mauritanian territory and that the area had been clearly marked with warning signs in Arabic and French.<sup>14</sup>

As noted above, Mauritania had announced the completion of clearance of all known areas of anti-personnel mine contamination in November 2015. The PNDHD had reported the release in 2015 of seven mined areas covering a total of 2.95km<sup>2</sup> with the destruction of 35 anti-personnel mines and 47 anti-vehicle mines.<sup>15</sup>

## ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the five-year extension request granted by states parties in 2015), Mauritania is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 January 2021.<sup>16</sup> It is on track to complete clearance in advance of this deadline.

In September 2017, the PNDHD informed Mine Action Review that funding had been secured from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for clearance of the remaining area and that it expected to deploy teams following a two-week refresher training course. Clearance was anticipated to be completed within three months, by December 2017, and the area to be released in early 2018, after QC has been carried out. It stated that no further suspicion of mined areas remained on Mauritania's territory and no further survey or efforts to clarify the border demarcation were required.<sup>17</sup>

Previously, in June 2017, Mauritania projected that with external funding of US\$75,000 it could complete clearance of the newly confirmed 1km<sup>2</sup> area by the end of the year and declare itself in compliance with Article 5 of the convention at the forthcoming meeting of states parties in December 2017. It appealed for donor support to reach this goal.<sup>18</sup>

The PNDHD reported that the Government of Mauritania provided US\$385,000 in 2016-17 to cover the cost of the national mine action programme, a reduction on the \$650,000 provided in 2015.<sup>19</sup> It did not report significant changes to its national mine action capacity, which included the management staff of the PNDHD, its QA/QC team, and eight teams of deminers from the Engineer Corps, consisting of nearly 60 persons in total.<sup>20</sup>

Mauritania has explained that the reasons for its inability to meet its initial Article 5 deadline of 1 January 2016 included lack of financial resources, insufficient progress in demining, use of only manual clearance, and difficult soil and climatic factors.<sup>21</sup> In its second extension request, Mauritania undertook to initiate and maintain dialogue with stakeholders with the aim of acquiring relevant topographic and cartographic information to determine the exact location of its northern border and to develop plans to address any contaminated areas identified within its jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup> Specifically it pledged to:

- Conduct a survey and mapping exercise of the northern border
- Maintain dialogue with stakeholders in the Western Sahara conflict to find a solution to clarifying the problem
- Develop and implement an action plan to address any contaminated areas if necessary
- Inform states parties of progress at the annual meetings and through Article 7 reports; and
- Maintain the PNDHD and demining units for residual clearance and risk education.

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- 1 Interview with Aliouneould Menane, National Coordinator, National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD), Intersessional meetings, Geneva, 5 September 2017.
  - 2 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D; statement of Mauritania, Intersessional meetings (Committee on Article 5 Implementation), Geneva, 8 June 2017; and email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017.
  - 3 Analysis of Mauritania's Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request submitted by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation to the 14th Meeting of States Parties, 17 November 2015, p. 2.
  - 4 Ibid., 21 April 2014.
  - 5 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 2 April 2015, p. 4. In the original French: "nous suspectons que le dispositif de sécurité le long de la frontière avec le Sahara occidental, composé de fortification et champs de mines interfère en territoire Mauritanien surtout qu'il n'existe aucune frontière naturelle".
  - 6 Revised Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 6 September 2010, p. 3; and email from Melissa Andersson, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), 17 September 2015.
  - 7 Decree No. 1960/MDAT/MDN establishing the PNDHD, 14 August 2007.
  - 8 Decree No. 001358/MDAT establishing the Steering Committee of the PNDHD, 3 September 2007.
  - 9 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017; and interview, in Geneva, 5 September 2017.
  - 10 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017.
  - 11 Ibid.
  - 12 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016; and Melissa Andersson, NPA, 12 September 2016 and 13 March 2017.
  - 13 Statement of Mauritania, Intersessional meetings (Committee on Article 5 Implementation), Geneva, 8 June 2017.
  - 14 Ibid.; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
  - 15 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 25 October 2016. NPA's figures for its operations were just under 2km<sup>2</sup> released. Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 12 September 2016.
  - 16 It submitted the request in April 2015, despite being on track to complete clearance of all known areas containing anti-personnel mines by the end of the year. Under the five-year extension, the Mauritanian government would enter into a dialogue with "all of the stakeholders in the Western Sahara conflict" so as to clarify "the status of the suspected areas". Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 2 April 2015, p. 4.
  - 17 Interview with Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, in Geneva, 5 September 2017.
  - 18 Statement of Mauritania, Intersessional meetings (Committee on Article 5 Implementation), Geneva, 8 June 2017.
  - 19 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016 and 29 March 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
  - 20 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016 and 29 March 2017.
  - 21 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 3 February 2010, pp. 3–4.
  - 22 Decision on the request submitted by Mauritania for a Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 4 December 2015.