

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2023

TWENTY-TWO MONTH INTERIM EXTENSION REQUESTED TO 31 DECEMBER 2024

KEY DATA

**ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)
MINE CONTAMINATION: LIGHT**

MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

AROUND 1 KM²

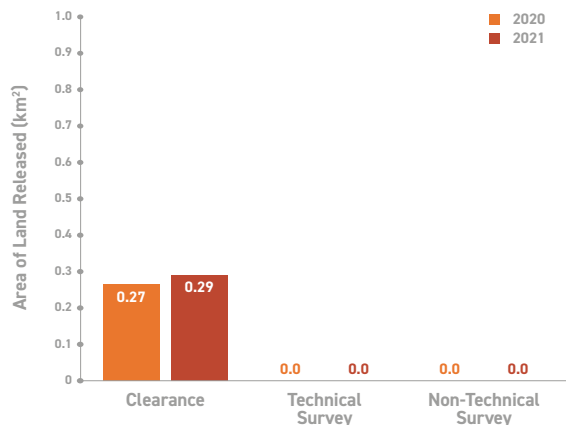
AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2021

0.29 KM²

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2021

9

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): LOW

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2021, Serbia continued its progress in Article 5 implementation and cleared a total of 0.29km² of mined area, with the destruction of nine anti-personnel mines. The Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) has yet to survey the previously unrecorded mine contamination discovered in October 2019 and August 2021 following forest fires.

Serbia has requested a 22-month extension to its clearance deadline to 31 December 2024, which will be considered at the Twentieth Meeting of States Parties in November 2022. SMAC has secured funding to clear all confirmed contamination in 2022 and planned to conduct non-technical survey of the newly discovered suspected areas in 2022–23, pending securing funding, in order to determine the amount of remaining mined area and plan for completion. Serbia then planned to submit a follow-on extension request at the end of March 2024, which will include a detailed work plan for the release of remaining anti-personnel mined area identified during the non-technical survey and for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Serbia should consider using its armed forces for mine clearance or inviting demining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help meet its treaty obligations by fulfilling its Article 5 obligations by 2023.
- Serbia should conduct as a matter of priority the planned survey of the suspected contamination identified in October 2019 and August 2021 in order to determine the size of the mined area and plan for its release.
- SMAC should conduct non-technical and technical survey rather than full clearance in instances where survey represents the most efficient means of land release for part or all of mined areas.
- SMAC should seek to develop National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) as soon as the new mine action decree is adopted.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2021)	Score (2020)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	5	5	Serbia had 561,800m ² of existing mined area remaining at the end of 2021, all located in Bujanovac municipality, but had yet to conduct non-technical survey to determine the size of previously unrecorded mined area identified as a result of fires in October 2019 and August 2021.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia has strong national ownership of its mine action programme, which is nationally funded. Planned national funding of €350,000 for survey and clearance operations was reduced to €260,000 per annum in both 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts by the Serbian government to tackle it. The funds were matched with donor funds through the ITF.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	4	4	SMAC does not have a gender policy in place and does not disaggregate relevant mine action data by sex and age. However, it does ensure women and children, as well as ethnic or minority groups, are consulted during survey and community liaison activities and that there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia submits accurate and comprehensive annual Article 7 reports on Article 5 progress, which are consistent between reporting periods, and provides regular updates on progress at Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) meetings. SMAC plans to install the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia planned to clear all confirmed mined area in 2022, but had yet to survey the previously unknown mined area discovered through forest fires in 2019 and 2021. Serbia planned to complete the survey in 2022–23, and to then submit a final extension request and work plan in March 2024 that will be based on the results of the non-technical survey and a clearer understanding of the extent and location of remaining mined area. Serbia produces revised annual work plans based on actual progress. In addition to mine clearance, Serbia is simultaneously addressing contamination from cluster munition remnants and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) that hinder socio-economic development.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	5	5	Serbia does not currently have national mine action standards. While SMAC continues to express a preference for full clearance of SHAs and only conducted clearance tasks in the last three years, it has said it is willing to conduct technical survey where appropriate. Clearance capacity deployed is typically manual teams, as the terrain and climate tend not to be suitable for mine detection dogs or machines.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	6	6	Clearance output in 2021 was a slight increase on the previous year. Serbia planned to complete clearance of existing known mined area in 2022, and to conduct non-technical survey in 2022–23 of the previously unrecorded mined areas discovered in October 2019 and August 2021. Serbia has requested an Article 5 deadline extension to 31 December 2024 and planned to submit a follow-on deadline extension request in March 2024, for the release of all remaining mined area identified through the non-technical survey. Serbia remains committed to the APMBC's 2025 completion aspiration. Meeting the deadline is largely contingent on securing sufficient funding and on how much mined area is identified during the non-technical survey.
Average Score	5.7	5.7	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior (acts as the national mine action authority)
- Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- In 2021, 11 companies/organisations (6 from Serbia and 5 from Bosnia and Herzegovina) were accredited for demining, but only one NGO (with a subcontractor) conducted clearance of anti-personnel mines in 2021:
 - NGO Stop Mines (contractor) and NGO IN Demining (subcontractor)

OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

As at March 2022, three areas in Bujanovac municipality, covering more than 0.56km², were suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (see Table 1). However, this excludes previously unrecorded anti-personnel mine contamination that was revealed as a result of fires in Bujanovac municipality in October 2019 and in August 2021, the size of which is not yet known.¹ The contamination as at March 2022, was a reduction on the 0.86km² of mined area as at end of 2020,² due to clearance of mined area in 2021.

Table 1: Anti-personnel mined area by village (at March 2022)³

Municipality	Village	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	1	390,300
	Končulj	1	143,500
	Dobrosin	1	28,000
Totals		2	*561,800

SHA = Suspected Hazardous Area * Excludes the newly discovered suspected mined areas

On 2–3 October 2019, in response to a request from local authorities, SMAC visited the villages of Đorđevac, Končulj, Lučane, Ravno Bučje, and Veliki Trnovac where fires had recently occurred and members of the local community had reported hearing explosions in several places, indicating the presence of mines. Representatives of SMAC and Emergency Management Staff of the municipality of Bujanovac visited the sites and interviewed local residents, local authority representatives, and firefighters, as well as police and the military. Mine incident questionnaires were completed in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and suspected mined areas were marked with signs in both Serbian and Albanian, as the population in this area is multi-ethnic.⁴ Fires also occurred in August 2021 too, in different area of the municipality of Bujanovac, during which there were also reports of explosions.⁵ The newly discovered contamination is not included in Table 1 above.

Subject to securing the necessary funding, SMAC had planned to conduct survey in 2021 to determine the size of the newly discovered contamination.⁶ Survey did not take

place in 2021, but was tentatively planned for 2022 and 2023 subject to funding. In response to questions from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Committee on Article 5 implementation, and in its revised 2022 deadline extension request, Serbia said that the planned non-technical survey of the previously unknown mined areas would involve survey and risk education of nearly 4.37km² (divided into five projects/areas, all located in the municipality of Bujanovac). The whole of the municipality is 461km² in size and has 38,300 inhabitants, 59 villages, and 30 local communities. Of the 4.37km² expected to be surveyed, SMAC expected that nearly 2.37km² will be cancelled, 1.5km² reduced, and 0.5km² cleared.⁷

Bujanovac is the only municipality in Serbia still affected by mines. According to SMAC, the contamination is from mines of an unknown origin and type which have not been emplaced to follow a pattern, and for which no minefield records exist.⁸ According to the national authorities, previous surveys found insufficient evidence for mined areas to be classified as confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), so they remain as suspected hazardous areas (SHAs).⁹ The fact that contamination is suspected makes it all the more important that SMAC conducts technical survey to confirm the presence of anti-personnel mines, before conducting full clearance. According to SMAC, the baseline of anti-personnel mine contamination has been established through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men, including, where relevant, from minority groups.¹⁰ SMAC does not possess data on explosive ordnance contamination of military areas in Serbia.¹¹

Historically, mine contamination in Serbia can be divided into two phases. The first exists as a legacy of the armed conflicts associated with the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The second concerned use of mines in 2000–01 in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo by a non-State armed group, the Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (OVPBM). The contamination remaining in Serbia is a result of this later phase.¹² Contamination also exists within Kosovo (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Kosovo for further information). SMAC requests that it be noted that all references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).¹³

1 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 6; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, Senior Advisor for Planning, International Cooperation and European Integrations, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

2 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

3 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

4 Statements of Serbia on Clearance, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019 and APMBC 18th Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; Article 7 Reports (covering 21); and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 26 and 30.

5 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 14 September 2022.

6 Statements of Serbia on Clearance, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019 and APMBC 18th Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; Article 7 Reports (covering 2019 and 2020); and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

7 Serbia, 'Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia', 3 August 2022; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 40.

8 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 6 and 34; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

9 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

10 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020 and 2021), Form D.

11 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

12 2013 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 5; and Article 7 Report (covering 2014), Form C.

13 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 May 2021.

Serbia is also contaminated with cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), which are either the result of the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign, remain from previous conflicts, or are the result of explosions or fire at military depots¹⁴ (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Serbia for further information).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

According to a Government Decree on Protection against Unexploded Ordnance, the Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior, acts as the national mine action authority (NMAA).¹⁵ The NMAA is responsible for developing standard operating procedures (SOPs), accrediting demining operators, and supervising SMAC.¹⁶

SMAC was established on 7 March 2002, with a 2004 law making it responsible for coordinating survey and clearance; collecting and managing mine action information (including casualty data); and surveying SHAs. It also has a mandate to plan demining projects, conduct quality control (QC) and monitor operations, ensure implementation of international standards, and conduct risk education.¹⁷ As from 1 January 2014, according to the Government Decree on Protection against Unexploded Ordnance, the Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior, was made responsible for accrediting demining operators. Previously, SMAC was responsible for doing so.¹⁸

A new director of SMAC was appointed by the Serbian government in July 2019.¹⁹ As at March 2022, nine people were employed at SMAC – the Director, two assistant directors, and six other employees.²⁰

In November 2020, representatives from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) visited SMAC. It was jointly concluded that the GICHD could usefully provide support to SMAC for the development of national mine action standards (NMAS) through the provision of training and assistance with information management.²¹

SMAC is fully funded by Serbia, including salaries and running costs, as well as for survey activities, development of project tasks for demining and clearance of contaminated areas, follow-up on implementation of project tasks, and quality assurance (QA) and QC of demining. In 2021, Serbia reported that around €320,000 per annum was allocated from the national state budget for the work of SMAC,²² an increase on the €270,000 provided in 2020.²³ In addition, the unexploded ordnance (UXO) disposal work of the Sector for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Interior is also State funded.²⁴

Planned national funding of €350,000 for survey and clearance operations in 2020 was reduced to €260,000 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts by the Serbian government to tackle it. It remained at the reduced level of €260,000 for 2021, matched with available donor funds through ITF Enhancing Human Security.²⁵ In addition to the €1,040,000 of total national funding pledged for 2022–25, Serbia estimated it will also need to secure an additional €2 million from international donors.²⁶

In June 2018, during the APMBC intersessional meetings, Serbia and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance convened an "Individualised Approach Platform" meeting, to hold a frank discussion with relevant stakeholders on the current status of Serbia's national programme, the needs and challenges in completing its Article 5 obligations.²⁷ SMAC reports having a resource mobilisation strategy for Article 5 implementation.²⁸ No formal in-country national platform for dialogue exists, but SMAC said that it cooperates closely with the Bujanovac national authorities and other relevant stakeholders, in particular the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Defence (MoD), as well as embassies of donor nations.²⁹

14 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

15 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 70/13.

16 Emails from Darvin Lisica, Regional Programme Manager, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), 6 May and 12 June 2016; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 20.

17 Law of Alterations and Supplementations of the Law of Ministries, Official Gazette, 84/04, August 2004; interview with Petar Mihajlović and Slađana Košutić, SMAC, Belgrade, 26 April 2010; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 20–21.

18 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 20.

19 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

20 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

21 Statement of Serbia on International Cooperation and Assistance, APMBC 19th Meeting of States Parties (19MSP) (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021.

22 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022. Serbia's Article 7 report (covering 2021), put the figure for government support to SMAC at €350,000.

23 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Section 4; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

24 SMAC, "Mine situation", accessed 8 May 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/1Nom1V7>.

25 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 9 and 37; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

26 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, APMBC (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 9 and 37.

27 APMBC Individualised Approach Meeting, intersessional meetings, Geneva, 7 June 2018; and 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, Additional Information received 28 June 2018.

28 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

29 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

In March 2020, SMAC and the Serbian Armed Forces General Staff of the Ministry of Defence, signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the field of demining and UXO/ERW removal. The Agreement is reported to envisage, among others, the joint participation in training of personnel to conduct demining and UXO/ERW demolition operations, training certification, joint participation in survey, collection of data on UXO/ERW-suspected and contaminated areas, as well as implementation of UXO/ERW removal projects, with monitoring and implementation of the IMAS and regulations in the field of demining. The initial focus will reportedly be on the training of personnel in UXO/ERW demolition operations,³⁰ and not on clearance of mined areas.³¹

In late 2019, the Serbian government approved funds for the establishment of a training centre within SMAC. The training centre became operational in 2020. Together with experts from the Ministry of Interior, SMAC will provide different training modules, including on ERW recognition, IMAS, medical aspects, and risk reduction.³² A "train-the-trainer" course for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) levels 1 and 2 was held on 25 October–19 November 2021 at the training centre, in a cooperation between SMAC and the MoD, with financial support from the European Union (EU) delegation in Belgrade. The training involved both SMAC and MoD staff.³³

In 2021, the United States (US) Department of State donated two terrain vehicles, a number of detectors and "multifunctional devices", and personal protective equipment to SMAC, through the ITF.³⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

SMAC said that it has been committed to taking environmental aspects into account and minimising potential harm from demining activities ever since its foundation. It reported that for each survey or clearance project task there is an obligation on the contractor (the demining operator) to include in its execution plan an environmental protection and a fire protection plan, together with a plan for health and safety at work.

Illustrative examples related to environment being taken into consideration during CMR clearance operations include contaminated areas cleared in Kopaonik National Park. For these tasks, a special regime was required for the protection of native trees and other plant species. The chopping down of trees, and the cutting of tree branches and blueberry and juniper bushes, as well as the removal of plants could only be conducted in justified cases and after obtaining the consent of relevant authorities.³⁵

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

In 2014, following the initiative of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, a Coordination Body for Gender Equality was formed as a national coordinating mechanism for gender equality in Serbia. The coordination body recognises the importance of improving the position of women, focusing in particular on increasing the number of female entrepreneurs, as well as their equal participation in management bodies in education, science, culture, information, sports, agriculture, and rural development, among others.³⁶

At SMAC, four of the nine employees (just over 44%) are women, with two of the women (22% of total employees) holding managerial/supervisory level positions and two (22% of total employees) in operations positions.³⁷ SMAC does not have a gender policy in place and does not disaggregate relevant mine action data by sex and age. However, it does

ensure women and children are consulted during survey and community liaison activities,³⁸ and SMAC cooperates closely with the local authorities and other relevant stakeholders in this regard. SMAC also ensures ethnic or minority groups are consulted, which is important, as remaining mined areas are all located in the municipality of Bujanovac, which is an area with a multi-ethnic population. SMAC reports that it cooperates with Bujanovac municipality officials, including the mayor and deputy mayor, who are from different ethnic groups, and other employees in charge of community liaison activities.³⁹

With respect to the new mined area identified as a result of fires in October 2019 and August 2021, SMAC planned to conduct a survey which will include representatives of Serbian and Albanian personnel.⁴⁰

Serbia reports there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance operations.⁴¹

30 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form H.

31 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

32 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020 and 26 March 2021.

33 Statement of Serbia on International Cooperation and Assistance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 22; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

34 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 19.

35 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

36 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 22.

37 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

38 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

39 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

40 Statement of Serbia, APMB 18th Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

41 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

SMAC currently uses its own information management system. In early 2020, following initial discussions several years previously, SMAC informally discussed with the GICHD the possibility of installing the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA).⁴² In 28 June–2 July 2021, representatives from the GICHD visited SMAC to assess SMAC's information management capabilities and needs, as well as to offer detailed recommendations to SMAC to advance its information management processes and systems.⁴³ As at March 2022, SMAC was in the final stage of completing an administrative procedure which will enable the GICHD to support SMAC to implement IMSMA Core.⁴⁴

PLANNING AND TASKING

In its 2018 Article 5 deadline extension request, Serbia included a costed plan for the completion of demining, with clear milestones, for 2018–23.⁴⁵ Serbia subsequently updated the plan in its annual Article 7 reports. SMAC achieved release of 294,230m² of mined area in 2021, as per its plan for the year.

In its 2022 revised Article 5 deadline extension request, which was being considered at the APMBT Twentieth Meeting of States Parties, Serbia reported that it planned to release all known mined (561,800m²) in 2022, and to conduct non-technical survey of the previously unreported mined area in 2022–23.⁴⁶

The Government of Serbia adopts SMAC's annual work plans and medium term plans.⁴⁷ SMAC's 2022 annual work plan includes two mine clearance project tasks of 143,500m² and 28,000m² each, and one technical survey task of 390,300m², totalling 561,800m². Together this would address all three confirmed mined areas remaining.⁴⁸

SMAC also hoped to conduct an assessment/non-technical survey of the previously unknown mined areas in 2022 and 2023, in order to determine the location and extent of remaining contamination and plan for completion.⁴⁹

SMAC has tentatively provided funding to conduct this and was in negotiations with ITF regarding possible US State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) funding. SMAC expects that the non-technical survey project

will take up to one year and will include the areas where the forest fires occurred in October 2019 and August 2021, when explosions could be heard. It will also include all other areas in Bujanovac municipality where "the existence of other mine indicators might be reported". During this period, technical survey and clearance projects will then be developed, and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) activities will be conducted in all 59 villages of Bujanovac municipality.

Upon completion of non-technical survey, SMAC expected to have a better picture of the remaining contamination with which to then inform a follow-on deadline extension request to be submitted in March 2024 and considered by the Fifth Review Conference in 2024, including a detailed work plan for fulfilment of Serbia's Article 5 obligations.⁵⁰

Serbia prioritises the demining of areas which directly affect the local population, such as those close to settlements where local people have abandoned their houses and stopped cultivating land due to fear of landmines. Prioritisation of hazardous areas takes place between Serbia, SMAC, and donors according to agreed criteria. SMAC also noted that donors themselves sometimes also influence the choice of the areas which will be demined first, depending on availability and amount of their funds.⁵¹

Progress is, however, contingent on funding and Serbia has stated that if it cannot secure international support for demining, its work plan will be directly affected.⁵²

42 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

43 Statement of Serbia on International Cooperation and Assistance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

44 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

45 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 8, 9, 31, and 32.

46 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

47 Ibid., p. 21; email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019; and interview with Bojan Glamočtija, SMAC, in Geneva, 14 February 2020.

48 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7–8; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

49 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7 and 41; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

50 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7–8, and 35; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

51 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 12 April 2018 and 25 March 2022; Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 26 and 41.

52 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020 and 26 March 2021; Statements on Clearance, Fourth APMBT Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019 and 18th Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

According to SMAC, survey and clearance operations in Serbia are conducted in accordance with the IMAS.⁵³

Serbia is planning to adopt a new decree on protection against ERW. The draft decree, developed by SMAC and the Ministry of Interior, foresees the development of national mine action standards (NMAS); formally introduces the concept of land release, which was not defined in the former decree; aims to improve the accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation process; and prohibits the previous practice of independent ammunition technicians being hired by infrastructure companies (which will instead be done through tasking and coordination from SMAC).⁵⁴ As at August 2022, the Decree was in the final stages of being adopted by the government.⁵⁵

Under new directorship in late 2015, SMAC reassessed its land release methodology in order to prioritise full clearance over technical survey of hazardous areas.⁵⁶ This does not correspond to international best practice and is an inefficient use of scarce clearance assets. In February 2016, the then new director of SMAC reported to Mine Action Review that while SMAC supports the use of high quality non-technical survey to identify suspected mined areas, it will fully clear these areas, rather than using technical survey to identify the boundaries of contamination more accurately.⁵⁷

As at March 2022, SMAC's position on its preferred land release methodology remained the same under the current Director, but there was a continued willingness to conduct technical survey in a form "adjusted to the context of Serbia", in response to the stated preference of international donors for technical survey above clearance, where appropriate.⁵⁸ As previously mentioned, in a positive development, a new decree developed by SMAC and the Ministry of Interior and due to be adopted in 2021, introduces the concept of land release, which was not defined in the former decree.⁵⁹

SMAC's reluctance to apply technical survey to delineate confirmed mined area is due to its lack of confidence that such survey can effectively identify groups of unrecorded mines, not planted in specific patterns.⁶⁰ According to SMAC,

incidents involving people or animals have occurred in most of these suspected areas or else mines have been accidentally detected.⁶¹ In its Article 7 report (covering 2021) and in response to questions asked by the Committee on Article 5 implementation, Serbia said that "the size of the area to be cleared is determined on the basis of processed data which have been collected by a non-technical survey",⁶² suggesting that technical survey is not typically deployed to reduce mined areas.

SMAC has reported that the results of the initial survey data are analysed and then further non-technical survey is conducted to assess conditions in the field, and to gather statements by the local population, hunters, foresters, representatives of Civil Protection, and the police, among others. Data on mine incidents is another significant indicator.⁶³ Also, in the context of Serbia, there is reportedly limited potential to obtain additional information on the location of mined areas from those who laid the mines during the conflict.⁶⁴

Technical survey is employed "to additionally collect information by technical methods on a suspected area and in case when the data collected by a non-technical survey are not sufficient for suspected areas to be declared hazardous or safe".⁶⁵

While only clearance and not release by survey occurred in 2019–21, the reduction of mined area through technical survey in 2017 and 2018, however, does demonstrate SMAC's earlier willingness to adopt more efficient land release practices. Furthermore, a technical survey project was planned for 2022.⁶⁶ Clearance is reported to be conducted in accordance with the IMAS and to a depth of 20cm.⁶⁷

On 4–8 July 2021, as part of a study conducted by the GICHD on difficult terrain in mine action, the GICHD and SMAC jointly visited areas of "difficult terrain". The primary objective of the study is to support national authorities in their efforts to address explosive hazards and return land to safe and productive use.⁶⁸

53 SMAC, "Mine Situation, August 2022", accessed 20 August 2022, at: <http://bit.ly/1Nom1V7>; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

54 Article 7 Reports (covering 2020 and 2022), Form D; emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March and 26 July 2021; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

55 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 21.

56 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.

57 Ibid.

58 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 41; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

59 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

60 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, Additional Information received 28 June 2018.

61 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and Statement on Clearance, Fourth APMB Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.

62 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

63 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

64 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.

65 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

66 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 38; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

67 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

68 Statement of Serbia on International Cooperation and Assistance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

SMAC does not itself carry out clearance or employ deminers but does conduct survey of areas suspected to contain mines, CMR, or other ERW. Clearance is conducted by commercial companies and NGOs, which are selected through public tender procedures executed by the ITF, supported by international funding.⁶⁹

Serbia said productivity per deminer, depending on the mine situation, terrain configuration, land characteristics and vegetation, was up to 150m² per deminer per day.⁷⁰

The Ministry of Interior issues accreditation to mine action operators that is valid for one year. In 2021, 11 companies/organisations (six from Serbia and five from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)), were accredited for demining,⁷¹ but only one NGO conducted clearance of mined areas (see Table 2).

Clearance capacity was broadly similar to the previous year. No survey personnel were deployed in Serbia in 2021 or 2020.

The Serbian Armed Forces maintain a capability to survey, detect, clear, and destroy landmines. This capability includes many types of detection equipment, mechanical clearance assets, disposal expertise, and specialist search and clearance teams.⁷² An EOD department within the Sector for Emergency Management, in the Ministry of Interior, responds to call-outs for individual items of ERW, and is also responsible for demolition of items found by SMAC survey teams and by contractors/operators during clearance.⁷³

Technical survey and clearance in Serbia are primarily conducted manually. Mine detection dogs (MDDs) were used

in technical survey and clearance operations in 2018 to release land,⁷⁴ but according to the authorities most of the mines are in mountainous areas with challenging terrain (with a slope of 5–10% and in several places up to 40%) and thick vegetation and are not appropriate for the use of MDDs or machinery.⁷⁵ The fact that these areas have not been accessed since the end of the conflict (2001), owing to the suspected presence of mines, means that the land is unmanaged, making it even less accessible.⁷⁶ Serbian armed forces use their machines and vehicles (excavators, trucks etc.) to improve the quality of access roads, ahead of clearance by contracted companies.⁷⁷

SMAC uses data obtained by unmanned aerial vehicles to develop and monitor clearance and technical survey projects.⁷⁸

In 2021, SMAC representatives attended a global non-technical survey course organised by the GICHD in Switzerland in August; a regional technical survey course organised by the GICHD in partnership with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in BiH in September; a regional quality management course organised by the GICHD in cooperation with SMAC in Serbia in November–December; and an online IMSMA training course organised by the GICHD in December.⁷⁹

SMAC said that it had tentatively secured donor funds to start a non-technical survey project of the previously unknown mined areas, which will require recruitment and training of two mixed survey teams (one Serbian and one Albanian team of two surveyors each). SMAC will supervise and monitor the non-technical survey in cooperation with the local authorities.⁸⁰

Table 2: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2021⁸¹

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers*	Dogs and handlers	Machines**
NGO Stop Mines (and NGO IN Demining subcontracted)	4	24	3 dogs and 6 handlers	0
Totals	4	24	3 dogs and 6 handlers	

* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers. ** Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters.

69 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 18.

70 Serbia, Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

71 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 36.

72 Article 7 Report (covering 2018), Form J.

73 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; Article 5 deadline Extension Request (2018), p. 18; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 3 June 2022.

74 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019.

75 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 23; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

76 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Section 4.

77 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 37.

78 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019.

79 Statement of Serbia on International Cooperation and Assistance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 22; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

80 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 9; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

81 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2021

A total of 0.29km² of mined area was released through clearance in 2021, destroying nine anti-personnel mines and four items of UXO.⁸² No mined area was reduced through technical survey or cancelled through non-technical survey in 2021.⁸³

SURVEY IN 2021

No mined area was reduced through technical survey or cancelled through non-technical survey in 2021 or in 2020.⁸⁴

CLEARANCE IN 2021

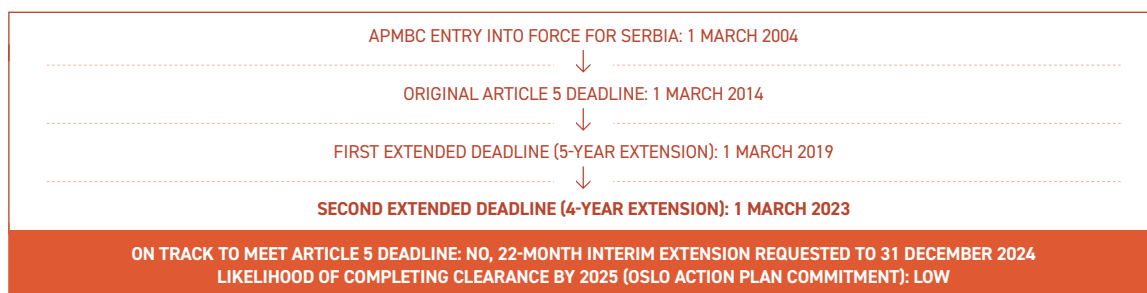
In 2021, a total of 294,230m² of mined area was cleared, destroying nine anti-personnel mines and four items of UXO (see Table 3).⁸⁵ Clearance was funded by the Serbian government, matched through ITF with available funds from the US PM/WRA and the Republic of Korea.⁸⁶ Clearance output in 2021, was broadly consistent compared to 2020, when 269,280m² of mined area was cleared, destroying 1 anti-vehicle mine along with 1,586 items of UXO, but no anti-personnel mines.⁸⁷

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2021⁸⁸

Municipality	Village	Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Bujanovac	Končulj	NGO Stop Mines	294,230	9	0	4
Totals			294,230	9	0	4

SMAC did not have available data on the number of mines destroyed by the EOD department within the Sector for Emergency Management during spot tasks in 2021.⁸⁹

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the second extension (for four years) granted by States Parties in 2018), Serbia 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 March 2023. Serbia will not meet this deadline and in March 2022 it submitted a request to extend its deadline by a further two years to 1 March 2025. In August 2022, in response to feedback from the Committee on Article 5 implementation, Serbia then resubmitted a revised 22-month extension request to request an interim deadline of 31 December 2024 instead of 1 March 2025. In doing so, Serbia is requesting only the period of time necessary to complete non-technical survey of Bujanovac municipality and gather necessary information to design a work plan for completion as part of a subsequent request to be submitted in March 2024. Serbia's aim is to project with greater certainty the number and size of remaining mined areas and the amount of time and funds required to release the areas and fulfil its Article 5 obligations. The global goal of a mine free world by 2025 remains its objective.⁹⁰

82 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 14; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D and Annex III.

83 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

84 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

85 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D and Annex III; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

86 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 13.

87 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D and Annex III.

88 Ibid.; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

89 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

90 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

Serbia planned to make every effort to complete technical survey and clearance of the three known mined areas (totalling 561,800m²) in 2022 and had secured national and international funding for this.⁹¹

Then, in 2022–23, Serbia planned to complete non-technical survey of the areas where forest fires occurred October 2019 and August 2021 and explosions could be heard, enabling it to determine a complete picture of the remaining mined areas and a detailed work plan for completion, with which to inform its fourth, and hopefully final, deadline extension request in 2024. As at August 2022, Serbia was in negotiations with ITF and the PM/WRA regarding seeking funding for the non-technical survey.⁹² SMAC expects it will take a year to recruit survey teams; conduct training and survey; input and analyse data; and create a prioritised plan for clearance. Upon completion of the non-technical survey, SMAC will have a clear picture of the remaining contamination, and can develop an updated work plan for completion.⁹³ Funds for the land release of any newly identified mined areas had yet to be secured as at August 2022, but SMAC estimated that it required €1.04 million of national funding and €2 million from the ITF and other sources of funding.⁹⁴

Serbia has stated that it remains fully committed to fulfilling its Article 5 obligations, in order to provide safety of local populations, safe exploitation of woods, safe use of roads, environmental protection, and reduction of fire risks.⁹⁵ Serbia planned to submit a follow-on deadline extension request in March 2024, which will include a detailed work plan for the release of any mined areas identified through non-technical survey in 2022–23. It also said that the global 2025 completion goal remains its objective.⁹⁶

According to SMAC, the following circumstances have impeded it from meeting its extended 1 March 2023 deadline: unregistered mine contamination, emplaced in groups and not patterns; discovery of previously unknown mine suspected areas in 2019 and 2021; climatic conditions preventing access to contaminated areas for some of the year (the temperature must be above 5°C for demining operations to take place); and reduction in national funding for demining operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SMAC is also faced with explosive ordnance contamination other than mines, including clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.⁹⁷ In its extension

request, Serbia further highlighted the challenge of the lack and unpredictability of secure financial resources.⁹⁸

Furthermore, Serbia's claim to continued jurisdiction over Kosovo entails legal responsibility for remaining mined areas under Article 5 of the APMBC.⁹⁹ However, Serbia did not include such areas in either its first or second extension request estimates of remaining contamination or plans for the extension periods. In its 2022 APMBBC Article 5 deadline extension request, however, Serbia stated that: "In the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, there are mined areas, as well as areas contaminated with cluster bombs remaining after the armed conflicts. Pursuant to Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council (Annex II, item 6), it is envisaged that after the withdrawal, an agreed number of the Republic of Serbia personnel will be allowed to return to perform certain functions, including marking and clearing minefields. As this provision of Annex II has not been implemented, this issue is still within the competence of UNMIK in accordance with Resolution 1244."¹⁰⁰

In the last five years Serbia has cleared a total of 1.46km² of mined area (see Table 4).

Table 4: Five-year summary of anti-personnel mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2021	0.29
2020	0.27
2019	0.61
2018	0.29
2017	*0
Total	1.46

*0.28km² was reduced through technical survey, during which three anti-personnel mines were destroyed.

The Serbian government has allocated €260,000 for demining operations in 2022 to release the three areas of known mined area (excluding the previously unknown mined areas discovered in 2019 and 2021), which will be matched by funding from PM/WRA and the Republic of Korea.¹⁰¹

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

SMAC expects to need both national and international capacity to deal with any residual contamination that may be discovered following completion of planned mine clearance.¹⁰² SMAC has reported that it has been cooperating with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence to plan for sustainable national capacity to address previously unknown mined areas post fulfilment of its Article 5 clearance obligations.¹⁰³

91 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

92 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

93 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

94 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

95 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

96 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 35; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

97 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 34; Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D; email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

98 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

99 See also in this regard UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

100 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 10.

101 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

102 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

103 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.