

MAURITANIA



CLEARING THE MINES 2020

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JANUARY 2021
EXTENSION REQUESTED TO 1 JANUARY 2022

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)
MINE CONTAMINATION:

TO BE DETERMINED

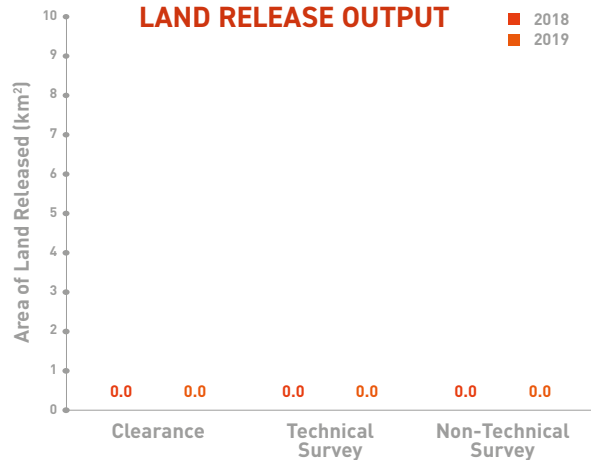
AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2019

0 KM²

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2019

0

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



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

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Having previously declared fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in November 2018, Mauritania submitted a request in June 2020 to extend its Article 5 deadline by one year having discovered mined areas under its jurisdiction or control. During the requested extension period, and once circumstances regarding the COVID-19 pandemic permit, the National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD) plans to conduct an assessment of suspected and confirmed mined areas, with the support of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Mauritania should clarify whether the mined areas in question are currently under Mauritania's effective control. If so, and they are also under its jurisdiction, they should proceed with all speed to undertake an assessment mission with NPA, as soon as funding and restrictions regarding COVID-19 permit. If, however, the areas are under Mauritania's effective control but not under its jurisdiction, discussions need to be held as a matter of urgency with others concerned, in particular Morocco and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.
- Mauritania should confirm whether the mined areas identified are newly discovered or if any of the areas were already recorded as mined but were previously thought to be not under Mauritania's jurisdiction or its control.
- Mauritania should report more accurately and consistently on the extent of anti-personnel mine contamination, including using the classification of suspected hazardous area (SHA) and confirmed hazardous area (CHA) in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Army Engineer Corps

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

In June 2020, after having declared fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations on 29 November 2018 at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC, Mauritania reported the discovery of mined areas (or "Zones", as Mauritania refers to them).¹ Mauritania has requested a one-year extension to its Article 5 deadline, during which the PNDHD, in collaboration with NPA, plans to investigate the mined areas and "possibly discover other areas not currently known".² One reported mine accident occurred in 2019, in the Nouadhibou region.³

Mauritania has now reported a total of over 8km² of mined area (4.7km² of CHA and nearly 3.4km² of SHA) (see Tables 1 and 2).⁴ However, it is unclear how the size and location of the 32 "zones" has been determined, and estimates of the size of mined areas is only provided for the region of Tiris Zemmour (in the north of the country), but not the other three provinces affected.

Table 1: Anti-personnel mined area by region (at end 2019)⁵

Province	Confirmed "zones"	Suspected "zones"	Total mined "zones"	Confirmed mined area (m ²)	Suspected mined area (m ²)	Total mined area (m ²)
Adrar (central)	N/K	2	2	N/K	N/K	N/K
Dakhlet Nouadhibou (west)	11	4	15	N/K	N/K	N/K
Tagant (central)	N/K	N/K	1	N/K	N/K	N/K
Tiris Zemmour (in the north)	10	4	14	4,710,666	3,375,000	8,085,666
Totals	21	10	32	4,710,666	3,375,000	8,085,666

* N/K = Not known

It is also unclear whether all of the mined areas identified in Mauritania's 2020 Article 5 deadline extension request are currently under Mauritania's effective control, and, if so, whether they are also under its jurisdiction. If the areas are under Mauritania's effective control but not under its jurisdiction, Mauritania will need to discuss this as a matter of urgency with others concerned, in particular Morocco and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic. It is also unclear to what extent the mined areas identified in its 2020 Article 5 extension request are newly discovered or if any of the mined areas were already known but were previously thought to be not under Mauritania's jurisdiction or its control.

Table 2: Anti-personnel mined area by zone (at end 2019)⁶

"Zone" name	CHA (m ²)	SHA (m ²)
Boudheir	270,000	
Boukhzame	450,000	
Boukweima	740,000	
Boulenoir		420,000
Dhara el Kelba		105,000
Elmetlani		850,000
EzireEzargha	167,944.7	
Lemriera		2,000,000
Oudyatte Bouzeyanne	450,000	
Oudyatte Lekhyame	254,000	
PK24	81,380.8	
PK55	255,285.4	
Tamreikett	210,000	
TIGERT2,1	2,000,000	
Totals	4,878,610.9*	3,375,000

* The table sums to 4,878,610.9m², but in Mauritania's extension request and its Article 7 report, the total is stated to be 4,710,666.2m².

Mauritania previously declared completion of its Article 5 obligations in November 2018, at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties.⁷ Prior to this, at the end of 2015, Mauritania had reported that it had released all known areas of anti-personnel mine contamination (which had totalled 40 mined areas covering 67km²),⁸ but that 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.⁹ In its 2015 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". It also said that border markers from the colonial period were unclear, non-existent and/or found at intervals of between 115 and 175 kilometres.¹⁰ At the end of 2017, Mauritania reported no known or suspected areas containing anti-personnel mines following technical survey and clearance of an area with an estimated size of 1km², in Ain Bintilli district, Tiris Zemmour region.¹¹ The area had contained both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.¹²

In its 2020 Article 5 deadline extension request, Mauritania reported release of a total of 130km² of area since becoming a State Party to the APMBC in January 2001, with the destruction of 8,078 anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-vehicle mines, and 14,960 explosive remnants of war (ERW).¹³ This figure looks to include release of all contaminated areas, including those with ERW and not only mines.

Mauritania's mine contamination was a legacy of the conflict over Western Sahara in 1976-78.¹⁴ A 2006 Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) had found a total of 65 SHAs covering 76km² and affecting 60 communities. This proved to be a significant overestimate of the actual extent of the 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.¹⁵ In its 2020 extension request, Mauritania said that the large-scale use of mines in Mauritania was typically haphazard and without the use of plans or maps.¹⁶

Mauritania has also reported discovering cluster munition remnant contamination.¹⁷ Please see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Mauritania for more information.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD), which was created in 2000, coordinates mine action operations in Mauritania.¹⁸ Since 2007, the programme has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation, with oversight from an interministerial steering committee.¹⁹ The PNDHD has its headquarters in the capital, Nouakchott, and a regional mine action centre (RMAC) in Nouadhibou.

Mauritania estimates that it requires a total five-year budget of US\$5.5 million, including \$3 million to be provided by the PNDHD and the remaining US\$2.5 million to be mobilised from other sources. PNDHD's national contribution reportedly represents 54% of the total cost of its programme and, according to Mauritania, demonstrates its political will. Mauritania's national contribution will include the provision of demining teams, support for deminers, the setting up of regional offices, assistance to victims, and logistical support.²⁰

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

It is not known if the PNDHD has policies in place relating to gender and diversity in its mine action programme, and gender and diversity are not referenced in Mauritania's 2020 Article 5 Extension Request or its Article 7 report covering 2019.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The national mine action database is held at the PNDHD. As at December 2017, Mauritania had strengthened its information management capacity by providing additional training to an information management specialist and migrating to Version 6 of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) software.²¹

PLANNING AND TASKING

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.²² According to its latest Article 7 report, submitted in 2020, part of the international cooperation and assistance sought by Mauritania is to support its efforts to draft a new mine action strategy.²³

The main aims of Mauritania's work plan for 2017–20 were to complete clearance of the remaining contaminated areas, establish a strategy for residual contamination, and declare their compliance with Article 5 before 1 January 2021.²⁴ Mauritania declared compliance with Article 5 at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties in November 2018,²⁵ but then subsequently submitted an Article 5 deadline extension request in June 2020, having newly discovered mined areas.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Survey and clearance operations are conducted in accordance with the Mauritanian National Mine Action Standards (NMAM), which are said to accord with IMAS. The NMAM include standards on non-technical survey, technical survey, mine clearance, and quality control (QC). The NMAM, which were adopted in 2007, were elaborated with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and in partnership with operators, most notably NPA.²⁶ The NMAM are supposed to be reviewed once every three years,²⁷ but have not been revised since 2006.²⁸

Mauritania reports that non-technical survey is used to identify each CHA ("Zone Dangereuse Confirmée" or "ZDC") and to cancel areas in which there is no evidence of mine contamination; and technical survey is then typically used to identify a "Zone Dangereuse Définie" (defined hazardous area or "DDZ").²⁹

In December 2019, Mauritania attended the Arab Regional Cooperation Programme 7th Annual Conference, which was organised by the GICHD in Jordan. In the conference, the PNDHD, along with other national authorities from the region, discussed and approved recently translated IMAS into Arabic and shared experiences of their own national standards.³⁰

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In accordance with a 2006 decree, all clearance activities were conducted by the Army Engineer Corps operating under the PNDHD. In 2011, 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 2015.³¹

The PNDHD has requested NPA's support in 2020 to conduct an assessment mission to determine the details of mined areas discovered since its declaration of Article 5 completion in November 2018.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any mined area in 2019.

SURVEY IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any mined area through survey in 2019, but it did report that PNDHD teams and "foreign experts" conducting non-technical survey to confirm new mined areas.³² Non-technical survey was reportedly conducted by the PNDHD following information from shepherds and nomads in the region of Tires Zemmour (in the north of the country), and by fishermen in the region of Dakhlet Nouadhibou (in the west of the country).³³

According to Annex II of Mauritania's latest Article 7 Transparency report submitted under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), an international organisation, GEODE, conducted a needs assessment of Mauritania's demining programme on 3–7 January 2020. The assessment mission took place in Nouakchott, then in Noadhibou, where several mined areas were assessed by GEODE. According to GEODE's report (incorporated as Annex II to Mauritania's CCM Article 7 report covering 2019), four mined zones were identified in the Noadhibou peninsular with a total estimated size of over 13km² ("PK24", 0.9km² in size; "Guerguerat", 0.3km²; "Zire Zargue", 7.35km²; and "PK55", 4.5km²). Photographs of mines at these four sites were included in GEODE's needs assessment report for Mauritania.³⁴ It is not possible to reconcile two of these minefield names with data reported by Mauritania under the APMBBC (see Table 2 above), and the sizes of the mined areas do not seem consistent with the other information provided by the authorities.

CLEARANCE IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any mined area through clearance in 2019.³⁵

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Mauritania's original Article 5 deadline of 1 January 2011 was previously extended twice and currently ends on 1 January 2021. Mauritania had previously declared fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties in November 2018, but in June 2020, Mauritania submitted a third interim extension request to its Article 5 deadline, reporting that it had discovered new mined areas in the regions of Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Tiris Zemmour, and Adrar.³⁶

Mauritania has requested a one-year extension of its deadline until 1 January 2022, in order to clarify the mined areas and confirm they are in Mauritanian territory.³⁷ According to the request, the size of the suspected and confirmed mined areas totals over 8km²,³⁸ but it is unclear how this figure has been determined and whether it only includes mined area or cluster munition remnant contamination too.

Mauritania plans to conduct an assessment mission, with the support of NPA, as soon as restrictions due to COVID-19 permit, in order to obtain additional information on the mined areas and inform its Article 5 planning.³⁹ The PNDHD requires international funding and cooperation to finalise its work plan in northern Mauritania.⁴⁰

Mauritania is requesting financial support for logistics (replacement of IT equipment; PNDHD offices and vehicles, and demining equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE)); organisational support (establishment of a functioning working environment for PNDHD; updating frameworks, including the drafting of a new national mine action strategy; updating of national mine action standards and operating procedures; and training of PNDHD staff); capacity building of PNDHD staff (including in planning, conducting, and supervising mine action activities); training (in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), reporting, and quality management); and operational support for planned actions in the provinces of Dakhlet Nouadhibou and Tires Zemour (including technical survey and hazard marking; quality management); and risk education.⁴¹

Mauritania has committed to keeping States Parties informed of developments at treaty meetings and through its Article 7 reporting.⁴²

PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

Mauritania has reported that it "will remain committed to dealing with any residual contamination",⁴³ although no details have been provided on its plans to establish a long-term sustainable national capacity to address previously unknown mined areas following completion (i.e. residual contamination).

Previously PNDHD had reported that one of the main aims of Mauritania's work plan for 2017–20 was to establish a strategy for residual contamination.⁴⁴

- 1 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 1 and 3. On pages 2 and 3 of Mauritania's 2020 extension request it says the requested deadline is 31 January 2022 and on page 10 it says 1 January 2022. It is assumed that the latter is correct, as Mauritania is requesting a one-year extension and its existing Article 5 deadline is 1 January 2021.
- 2 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 1 and 3.
- 3 Ibid., p. 4; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 10.
- 4 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 3; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3.
- 5 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3.
- 6 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 3; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 11.
- 7 Statement of Mauritania, APMBBC 18th Meeting of States Parties, 29 November 2018; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 8 Analysis of Mauritania's Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request submitted by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation to the APMBBC 14th Meeting of States Parties, 17 November 2015, p. 2.
- 9 Ibid
- 10 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".
- 11 Email from Alioune ould Menane, National Coordinator, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.
- 12 Article 7 Report (covering 2016), Form D; Statement of Mauritania, Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Geneva, 8 June 2017; and email from Alioune ould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017.
- 13 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2 and Annex 1, pp. 11–13.
- 14 Ibid., p. 2.
- 15 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.
- 16 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 17 Ibid., Annex 1, p. 14.
- 18 Decree No. 1960/MDAT/MDN establishing the PNDHD, 14 August 2007; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 19 Decree No. 001358/MDAT establishing the Steering Committee of the PNDHD, 3 September 2007; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 20 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 10.
- 21 Article 7 Report (covering 2017), Form D.
- 22 Email from Alioune ould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017; and interview, in Geneva, 5 September 2017.
- 23 APMBBC Article 7 Report (covering 2019), pp. 13–14.
- 24 Email from Alioune ould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.
- 25 Statement of Mauritania, 18th Meeting of States Parties, 29 November 2018; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 26 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 5 and 8.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Annex II.
- 29 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 13.
- 30 Email from Hayder AlShakeri, Programme Officer, GICHD, 23 July 2020.
- 31 Emails from Alioune ould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016; and Melissa Andersson, NPA, 12 September 2016 and 13 March 2017.
- 32 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), pp. 2 and 3.
- 33 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3.
- 34 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Annex II.
- 35 APMBBC Article 7 Report (covering 2019).
- 36 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2; Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3; and online presentation by Mauritania, APMBBC Intersessional Meetings, 2 July 2020, available at: bit.ly/3iBV1Dd.
- 37 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
- 38 Ibid, p. 3. On pages 2 and 3 of the extension request it says it is requesting a deadline until 31 January 2022, and on page 10, 1 January 2022. It is assumed that the latter is correct, as Mauritania is requesting a one-year extension and its existing Article 5 deadline is 1 January 2021.
- 39 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 1 and 10; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 9.
- 40 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 10.
- 41 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), pp. 13–14.
- 42 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 10.
- 43 Ibid., p. 3.
- 44 Email from Alioune ould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.