

# MAURITANIA



**ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JANUARY 2021**  
(CLEARANCE COMPLETED)

<b>PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE</b>	2017	2016
Problem understood	8	8
Target date for completion of mine clearance	10	7
Targeted clearance	8	8
Efficient clearance	8	8
National funding of programme	6	6
Timely clearance	6	5
Land-release system in place	8	8
National mine action standards	8	8
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	7	7
<b>PERFORMANCE SCORE: GOOD</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.0</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 early 2017, Mauritania

confirmed that a 1km<sup>2</sup> mined area within its territory contained anti-personnel mines. Clearance of this area was completed in December 2017. As at July 2018, a proposal had been submitted to the government of Mauritania regarding issuing a declaration of compliance regarding its Article 5 obligations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- 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 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 1km<sup>2</sup>, in Ain Bintilli district, Tiris Zemmour region.<sup>1</sup> The area contained both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of 2015, Mauritania had reported it had released all known areas of anti-personnel mine contamination. This totalled 40 mined areas covering 67km<sup>2</sup>.<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 was a legacy of the conflict over Western Sahara in 1975–78. A 2006 Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) had found a total of 65 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) covering 76km<sup>2</sup> 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.<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 Decentralisation, 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>

The main aims of Mauritania’s workplan for 2017–20 were to achieve clearance of the remaining contaminated areas, establish a strategy for residual contamination, and declare their compliance with Article 5 before 1 January 2021.<sup>10</sup>

As at July 2018, clearance of mined areas was complete and a proposal had been submitted to the Government of Mauritania that a declaration of compliance with their Article 5 obligations be made.<sup>11</sup>

### Quality Management

In 2017, the PNDHD deployed its quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) capacity during clearance of the Sebkhath Fogra minefield.<sup>12</sup>

## Information Management

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.<sup>13</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>14</sup>

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## 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 in Sebkhata Fogra, Ain Bintilli district covering an estimated 1km<sup>2</sup> and containing both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.<sup>15</sup> It stated that assessment 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>16</sup> Mauritania reported that it had released all 1km<sup>2</sup> by 15 December 2017 (835,467m<sup>2</sup> reduced by technical survey and 164,533m<sup>2</sup> released by clearance).<sup>17</sup> During the clearance, 93 anti-personnel mines and 35 anti-vehicle mines were found and destroyed.<sup>18</sup>

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## 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 was 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>19</sup> Mauritania has now completed clearance and is working towards making a formal declaration of compliance with its Article 5 obligations.

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 completed on 15 December 2017. It stated that no further suspected mined areas remained on Mauritanian territory and no further survey or efforts to clarify the border demarcation were required.<sup>20</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 APMBC Article 5 at the forthcoming meeting of states parties in December 2017. It appealed for donor support to reach this goal.<sup>21</sup>

The PNDHD reported that the Government of Mauritania provided US\$385,000 in 2017–18 to cover the cost of the national mine action programme, the same amount that was provided in 2016.<sup>22</sup> It reported no change to its national mine action capacity in 2017, 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>23</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>24</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>25</sup>

In September 2017, 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>26</sup> As at July 2018, Mauritania's priorities for survey and clearance were to focus on any residual contamination.<sup>27</sup>

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- 1 Email from Aliouneould Menane, National Coordinator, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.
  - 2 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D; Statement of Mauritania, 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 APMBC 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, 23 July 2018.
  - 11 *Ibid.*
  - 12 *Ibid.*
  - 13 Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D.
  - 14 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016; and Melissa Andersson, NPA, 12 September 2016 and 13 March 2017.
  - 15 Statement of Mauritania, Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Geneva, 8 June 2017.
  - 16 *Ibid.*; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
  - 17 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July and 18 September 2018.
  - 18 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018; and Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D.
  - 19 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.
  - 20 Interview with Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, in Geneva, 5 September 2017 and Article 7 Report (for 2017) Form D.
  - 21 Statement of Mauritania, Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Geneva, 8 June 2017.
  - 22 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018; and Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D.
  - 23 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016, 29 March 2017, and 23 July 2018.
  - 24 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 3 February 2010, pp. 3–4.
  - 25 Decision on the request submitted by Mauritania for a Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 4 December 2015.
  - 26 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.
  - 27 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.