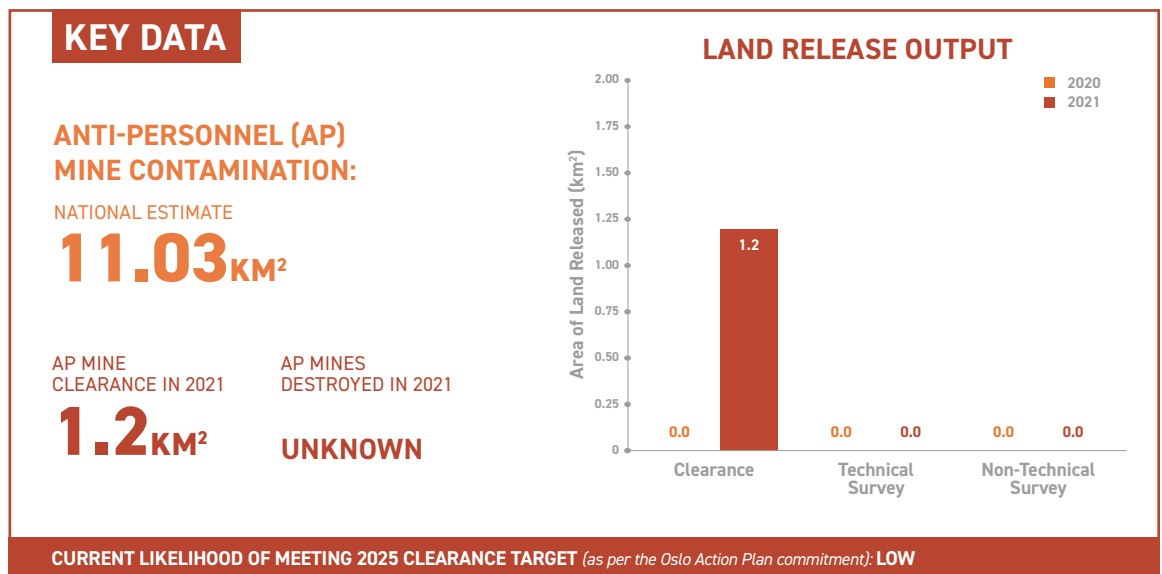


ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2026
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In February 2021, at the request of Mauritania, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) conducted an assessment of recently discovered mined areas in territory under its jurisdiction. The assessment identified a total of almost 15.5km² of mine contamination across ten suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), of which 10.9km² across eight SHAs contained only anti-personnel mines.¹ On 1 June 2021, Mauritania submitted a request to extend its Article 5 deadline by almost five years to the end of 2026, which was granted at the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (19MSP). Based on additional survey, Mauritania was now reporting that just over 11km² across 15 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) contained anti-personnel mines, with the size of a further area to be confirmed.²

In July 2022, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) said that it had secured Norwegian government funding to provide capacity development support to the national authority (the Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD), including for information management and revision of national mine action standards (NMAS). Contingent on signing the contract, which as at September 2022 was expected to be signed shortly, MAG will also conduct a contamination baseline assessment, non-technical survey, and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE). The planned capacity development project which spans from August 2022 to December 2025, will benefit the whole of Mauritania's mine action programme supporting the strengthening of systems, processes, and planning. MAG planned to prioritise compliance with Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

¹ NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 6; and email from Melissa Andersson, Country Director, NPA, 26 April 2021.

² Additional information submitted by Mauritania to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, 10 September 2021, p. 1. There is a discrepancy in the contamination type reported in Mauritania's fourth Article 5 deadline extension request (submitted in June 2021) and the subsequent additional information provided by Mauritania in September of the same year. On page 5 of the extension request, Mauritania reports that CHA Rbeit l'char-1 contains APID51 and PT M-iK mines, the former being an anti-personnel mine. In the latter document, the same CHA is reported to contain only PT M-iK mines, which are anti-vehicle mines. The figures in the Article 5 deadline extension request are more likely to be correct as they are consistent with what was reported by NPA's assessment mission in March 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Mauritania should conduct technical survey to establish a more accurate baseline of anti-personnel mine contamination and better determine the size of the identified CHAs.
- Mauritania should report on its anti-personnel mine contamination accurately, consistently, and in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), including through timely submission of Article 7 reports.
- Mauritania should continue its efforts to mobilise the necessary funds and operational support to enable survey and clearance of anti-personnel mine contamination.
- Mauritania should update its NMAS in accordance with the IMAS.
- Mauritania should elaborate a gender and diversity policy for mine action.
- Mauritania should establish a sustainable national capacity to address any residual anti-personnel mine contamination discovered following the fulfilment of Article 5 obligations.
- Mauritania should establish a multi-year national strategy to replace the one that expired in 2020.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2021)	Score (2020)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	7	In 2021, NPA, in collaboration with the PNDHD, conducted the first baseline survey assessment to determine the extent of anti-personnel mine contamination since Mauritania's discovery of new contaminated areas in 2019. The PNDHD, albeit with limited resources, continued to survey and identify new hazardous areas throughout 2021. Further technical survey is required to accurately determine the size and extent of the actual contamination.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	5	5	The PNDHD is the national entity responsible for coordination of mine action. Mauritania contributes resources to support its mine action programme but the PNDHD needs greater operational, financial, and technical capacity to fulfil that role.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	4	4	Mauritania does not appear to have a gender and diversity policy for mine action, and neither issue is referenced in the Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in June 2021 or in Mauritania's latest Article 7 report (covering 2020). Mauritania did, however, state in response to questions from the Committee on Article 5 Implementation that it intends to deploy diverse and gender-balanced teams to the extent possible, and that it includes consultation of women, girls, and boys in the planning of its mine action programme.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	4	4	Mauritania uses Version 6 of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) software. Mauritania's reporting does not classify mined areas into SHAs and CHAs in a manner consistent with IMAS and international best practice. Mauritania's reporting on its implementation of the APMBC is frequently late and lacks accuracy, and data it provides often vary across reports. As at August 2022, Mauritania had yet to submit its Article 7 report covering 2021.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	3	3	Mauritania's last mine action strategic plan and work plan expired in 2020. Part of the international cooperation and assistance sought by Mauritania is to support its efforts to draft a new mine action strategy. Mauritania estimates that anti-personnel mine clearance can be concluded in five years, accounting for the time required to mobilise resources, deploy teams to the field, and finalise reporting.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	6	6	Mauritania's NMAS were published in 2007, and were said to be in accordance with the IMAS at that time. The NMAS include standards on non-technical survey, technical survey, mine clearance, and quality control (QC). The PNDHD reported that the NMAS were reviewed and adapted to the "new ways of working". What is meant by this is unclear.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	5	5	In November 2021, Mauritania was granted an almost five-year extension to its Article 5 deadline to complete clearance. The PNDHD continued to survey and clear contamination within its limited resources, and has appealed for further support from the international community.
Average Score	5.2	5.2	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

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

- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) (programme closed in 2015; NPA conducted an ad-hoc assessment mission of contamination in Mauritania in 2021)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

There is no clear estimate of anti-personnel mined area under the jurisdiction or control of Mauritania as figures differ and reporting by Mauritania is incomplete and inconsistent. Mine Action Review has used one national estimate of just over 11km² as the national baseline but further survey is likely to reduce this figure significantly. In separate reporting to Mine Action Review this year, a single area in Dakhlet Nouadhibou was estimated to cover more than 9km².

On 23 June 2020, after having declared fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations on 29 November 2018 at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (17MSP), Mauritania reported the discovery of previously unknown mined areas.³ Three days later, it formally requested a thirteen-month extension to its Article 5 deadline, during which the PNDHD, in collaboration with NPA, planned to investigate the mined areas and “possibly discover other areas not currently known”.⁴ Since the declaration of completion in November 2018 and until 2021, a total of six mine incidents occurred,⁵ while others might have gone unreported.

In its Article 7 report covering 2019, Mauritania reported a total of more than 8km² of mined areas (4.7km² of CHA and nearly 3.4km² of SHA).⁶ However, it was not clear how the size and location of the 32 areas had been determined. Estimates of the size of mined areas were only provided for the region of Tiris Zemmour (north) and not the other three regions deemed affected.

In 2020, Mauritania requested NPA's support to survey the newly discovered contamination to better determine its scale. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment, which took one month to complete, could only take place in February 2021.⁷ Based on direct evidence, NPA confirmed the presence of 15.47km² of landmine contamination across 10 SHAs in Nouadhibou (west) and Tiris Zemmour (north) regions. Of the total, 10.90km² across eight SHAs contained anti-personnel

mines. In addition, two SHAs covering 4.56km² were contaminated with anti-vehicle mines.⁸

According to NPA, further survey work was required to determine the size and extent of the hazardous areas more accurately, and estimated that, once done, the areas requiring full clearance will be further reduced. NPA also highlighted the high likelihood of discovering residual contamination after completion, since mines are in remote and sparsely populated areas.⁹ Indeed, Mauritania continued to discover and report on new contamination in the months that followed NPA's initial assessment. By the time of the submission of its extension request in June 2021, Mauritania had estimated a total mined area of 16.18km² across 20 CHAs (see Table 2). Mauritania did not specify the type of contamination, but the types of mines it reported indicate that of the 20 CHAs, 5 cover a total of 0.7km² and contain only anti-personnel mines, 11 covering 10.33km² contain a mix of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, and 4 CHAs of at least 5.15km² contained only anti-vehicle mines. Of these latter four, one (at Gunive) had an area of unknown extent.¹⁰ In addition, as at June 2021, a PNDHD team was deployed in the area of Ouadane of Adrar region following a report from the local authorities that had indicated a mined area.¹¹

In March 2022, the PNDHD reported that it had continued to survey, discover, and clear new areas contaminated by anti-personnel mines. The most updated contamination figures provided by the PNDHD in March 2022 report a total anti-personnel mined area of 14.4km² across 17 CHAs in Dakhlet Nouadhibou and Tiris Zemmour regions (Table 1).¹² It is not clear whether the variance in contamination figures across the reports provided by Mauritania is a result of inaccurate data or due to continued land release during the period that followed the latest submission of Article 7 report in July 2021, but it is unlikely that Mauritania released a significant area of land in light of its limited national resources. Moreover, the latest PNDHD contamination data

3 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, pp. 1 and 3. On pages 2 and 3 of Mauritania's 2020 extension request it said the requested deadline was 31 January 2022 while on page 10 it said 1 January 2022. In November 2020, Mauritania was granted a thirteen-month extension to 31 January 2022.

4 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, pp. 1 and 3.

5 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2021, p. 8.

6 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 3; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3.

7 NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 2.

8 Ibid., p. 6; and email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 26 April 2021.

9 NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, pp. 2–3.

10 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 5.

11 Ibid., p. 6.

12 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, Chief of Operations, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

lack sufficient detail and do not include the contamination previously reported in Adrar region, calling these figures into question.

Mauritania did not elaborate the methodology it used to identify its hazardous areas, but estimated that the size of areas requiring actual clearance will be reduced by an average 37% once further survey is conducted.¹³ This means the areas are more akin to SHAs than CHAs.

In Nouadhibou, at least 11.53km² of the contamination was known to Mauritania prior to its declaration of compliance in November 2018, but was considered politically inaccessible until 2019. A further 3.82km² has been newly discovered since 2018. In Tiris Zemmour, Mauritania had not been aware of the mined areas before their discovery in 2019.¹⁴ In Adrar, it is not clear if the discovered mined areas was known to Mauritania before its compliance declaration. In its latest Article 5 deadline extension request, Mauritania states that: "Mauritania submitted a request in June 2020 to extend its Article 5 deadline by one year having recently found two additional minefields in the Northern areas of Mauritania, and then redefining which mined areas are considered to be under its jurisdiction or control in the Nouadhibou peninsula".¹⁵

Mauritania reported that all identified contamination in Nouadhibou and Tiris Zemmour regions lie clearly within its jurisdiction and control,¹⁶ bringing the duty to clear unequivocally within Mauritania's international legal obligations under the APMBC. The maps provided by Mauritania in its Article 5 deadline extension request, however, show minefields clearly extending beyond its borders and into the territory of Western Sahara, although these may contain only contain anti-vehicle mines.¹⁷ Moreover, as most of the minefields are located along the borders with Western Sahara, it is possible that anti-personnel contamination extends beyond Mauritanian territory. Such contamination, if it is found to exist, is outside of Mauritania's jurisdiction or control, and therefore any clearance would need to be agreed upon with the Western Sahara. For the Adrar minefields, it is not clear if the newly reported contamination lies within Mauritania's jurisdiction or control. Mauritania stated in its latest extension request, submitted in June 2021, that the PNDHD will "Coordinate with

relevant authorities to the extent possible on areas that lie outside of Mauritanian jurisdiction but under Mauritanian de facto control".¹⁸

Mauritania previously declared completion of its Article 5 obligations in November 2018, at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties.¹⁹ Prior to this, at the end of 2015, Mauritania reported that it had released all known areas of anti-personnel mine contamination (which had totalled 40 mined areas covering 67km²),²⁰ 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.²¹ 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 115km and 175km.²² 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 of Tiris Zemmour region.²³ The area had contained both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.²⁴

Mauritania's mine contamination was a legacy of the conflict over Western Sahara in 1976–78.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷

Mauritania also reported having discovered cluster munition remnants (CMR) contamination.²⁸ Please see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Mauritania for more information.

13 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 10.

14 NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 2.

15 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 4.

16 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

17 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, map 2, p. 6.

18 Ibid., p. 13.

19 Statement of Mauritania, APMBC 18th Meeting of States Parties (18MSP), 29 November 2018; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 2.

20 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.

21 Ibid.

22 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".

23 Email from Aliouneould Menane, National Coordinator, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.

24 Article 7 Report (covering 2016), Form D; Statement of Mauritania, Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Geneva, 8 June 2017; and email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 29 March 2017.

25 Ibid., p. 2.

26 Revised Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 6 September 2010, p. 3; and email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 17 September 2015.

27 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 2.

28 Ibid., Annex 1, p. 14.

Table 1: Anti-personnel mined area by region (at end 2021)²⁹

Region		CHA	Area (m ²)
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Nouadhibou	12	10,454,567
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Boulenoir	2	462,414
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Inal	1	3,362,364
Tiris Zemmour	Bir moghrein	2	114,565
Totals		17	14,393,910

Table 2: Anti-personnel mined area by region (as at June 2021)³⁰

Region	Location ID	CHA	CHA area (m ²)	Identified mines	Type of contamination ³¹
Adrar	Mayaateg	1	585,700	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Adrar	Gunive	1	N/K	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon24	1	839,424	APID51, ACID51	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Bouchon55	1	9,147,780	APID51, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Guergara	1	1,203,880	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Lewej 2	1	329,829	APID51, VS50	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 126	1	132,585	APID51	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Pk 173	1	3,362,364	Type 72	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Rbeit l'echar1	1	62,819	PT Mi-K	AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Wettatlechyakh	1	126,578	APID51	AP mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 1	1	28,794	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 2	1	16,257	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 3	1	23,638	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 4	1	14,696	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 5	1	75,375	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 6	1	25,565	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 7	1	26,654	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	Zirezargue 8	1	66,987	VS50, TM57	AP and AV mines
Tiris Zemmour	Boukhzame	1	63,796	VS50	AP mines
Tiris Zemmour	Guemgoum	1	50,769	APID51	AP mines
Totals		20	16,183,490		

AP = anti-personnel AV = anti-vehicle N/K = not known.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The PNDHD, which was created in 2000, coordinates mine action operations in Mauritania.³² Since 2007, the programme has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation, with oversight from an interministerial steering committee.³³ The PNDHD has its headquarters in the capital, Nouakchott, with a regional mine action centre located at Nouadhibou. As at April 2021, the PNDHD had one operational manager and six staff responsible for quality management (QM).³⁴

29 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

30 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 5; NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 6; email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 26 April 2021; and Mine Action Review data; Mauritania's Article 7 report (covering 2020) provides incomplete contamination data and is missing pages 4 and 5.

31 Mauritania's fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request did not specify the contamination type. This data is provided by Mine Action Review based on the mine types Mauritania reported.

32 Decree No. 1960/MDAT/MDN establishing the PNDHD, 14 August 2007; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 2.

33 Decree No. 001358/MDAT establishing the Steering Committee of the PNDHD, 3 September 2007; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 2.

34 Mauritania Assessment Report, NPA, 12 April 2021, p. 10.

Mauritania estimates in its latest extension request, submitted in June 2021, that it requires a total five-year budget of US\$9.65 million of international funding to address the newly reported mine contamination.³⁵ This is four times the amount Mauritania had initially intended to mobilise from international donors in its previous extension request, submitted in June 2020, which totalled US\$2.5 million.³⁶ Mauritania's contribution to the demining project will include human resources, office space, and the coordination of operations, including liaison with national and local governmental and military officials.³⁷ Mauritania allocated a budget of €91,000 to its mine action programme in 2021.³⁸

In its most recent Article 7 report submitted in July 2021, Mauritania identified the following areas as in need of support: logistical (replacement of equipment, furniture and vehicles), "organisational" in terms of workspace; staffing and revision of national standards; technical support and training of personnel of PNDHD central and regional offices; operational support and support of personnel during

survey, quality management, quality control, and awareness campaigns.³⁹

In July 2022, MAG said that it had secured Norwegian government funding for Mauritania, subject to contract signature, which as at September 2022 was expected shortly. Under the planned project, MAG will conduct the following activities: capacity and needs assessments; put in place a capacity development plan with the national authorities; review of Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) (quality control of existing/historical data and update/upgrade of the database for future data inputs); provide equipment and training for information management; support the review of NMAS; conduct a contamination baseline assessment, non-technical survey, and EORE. The planned project will benefit the whole mine action programme, but MAG planned to prioritise CCM Article 4 compliance.⁴⁰ The donor agreement, which covers August 2022 to December 2025, does not cover technical survey or clearance costs.⁴¹

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Mauritania is not thought to have environmental standards or a policy on management system in place. It is not known if Mauritania takes environmental considerations into account during survey and clearance activities.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

It is believed that the PNDHD does not have policies in relation to gender and diversity in its mine action programme. Gender and diversity are not referenced in Mauritania's latest Article 7 report (covering 2020) or its latest Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in July 2021.

Mauritania stated in its responses to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation that it considered gender and diversity to be important cross-cutting issues for its mine action programme, and that it intends to ensure that all groups are consulted when designing and implementing activities. It also stated that it will seek to achieve gender-balanced and diverse survey and clearance teams "to the extent this might be possible", while acknowledging "some limitations to achieving gender balance from the staff that would be seconded by the Corps of Engineers".⁴²

Mauritania stated that it involves civil society organisations and "target groups" in the areas of mine risk education (MRE) and ensures women's participation in both administration and operational levels. According to its statement, two women were employed in financial management and in victim assistance.⁴³

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 IMSMA software.⁴⁴ Mauritania did not disaggregate anti-personnel mine contaminated areas into CHAs and SHAs, in line with international best practice and International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) in its Article 7 report covering 2020 or its Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in June 2021. Mauritania often provides inconsistent and inaccurate contamination and clearance figures in its reports, and as at September 2022, had yet to submit its Article 7 report for 2021.

35 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, pp. 11–12.

36 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 10.

37 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, pp. 11–12; and email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

38 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F.

39 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), p. 12.

40 Email from Roxana Bobolicu, International Policy Manager, MAG, 19 July 2022.

41 Emails from Roxana Bobolicu, MAG, 19 July and 9 September 2022.

42 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, additional information, 10 September 2021, p. 4.

43 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, additional information, 16 September 2020, response 5.

44 Article 7 Report (covering 2017), Form D.

In 2021–22, the PNDHD created an interactive platform that provides updated contamination data, including the locations of identified mined and cluster munition-contaminated areas, surface area, and photos documenting the found items, in addition to a record of all technical and non-technical survey, clearance, and victim data.⁴⁵

In March 2022, two participants from the PNDHD participated in the Arab Regional Cooperation Programme (ARCP) IMSMA Core workshop organised by the Geneva International Centre of Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).⁴⁶

PLANNING AND TASKING

In March 2017, Mauritania developed a national mine action strategic plan for 2017–20 with a view to complete clearance of all the remaining contaminated areas, establish a strategy for residual contamination, and declare its compliance with Article 5 before January 2021.⁴⁷ Since its expiry in 2020, Mauritania's national mine action strategic plan has not been updated.

Mauritania's latest Article 5 deadline extension request envisages five years to technically survey and clear the anti-personnel mined areas identified. This includes six months to mobilise the necessary resources (funding, staffing, and equipment) as well as for team deployment.⁴⁸ Mauritania has issued an action plan for its proposed extension period.⁴⁹ The plan, however, lacks detail.

According to its Article 7 report submitted in 2020, part of the international cooperation and assistance sought by Mauritania is to support efforts to draft a new mine action strategy.⁵⁰ In its 2021 Article 5 deadline extension request, Mauritania said it would prioritise survey and clearance of the newly reported contaminated areas based on humanitarian impact, taking into account gender and diverse needs of the mine-affected communities.⁵¹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Survey and clearance operations are conducted in accordance with the NMAS (Les normes Mauritaniennes de l'action antimines), which are said to be compliant with IMAS. The NMAS, which include standards on non-technical survey, technical survey, mine clearance, and quality control (QC), were adopted in 2007. They were revised with the help of the GICHD in partnership with operators, especially NPA in 2010, and were translated into Arabic in 2011.⁵² The NMAS are supposed to be reviewed once every three years,⁵³ but have not been revised since 2006.⁵⁴ In March 2022, the PNDHD reported having revised and adapted the NMAS to the "new ways of working",⁵⁵ but did not make clear what is meant by this.

In 2021, Mauritania recognised that an update to its NMAS is due and committed to "carry out an analysis of its NMAS to ensure that they are up to date and fit for purpose to address the remaining challenge".⁵⁶ Subject to signing of contract with the Norwegian government, MAG intends to support Mauritania to review its NMAS as part of its capacity development plan.⁵⁷

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

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

MAG has been working in Mauritania since November 2017, supporting the safe storage of state-held arms and ammunition depots, and providing training to local security and defence force personnel on the same topic.⁵⁸ As noted above, MAG reported in July 2022 that it had potentially secured Norwegian funding for capacity development support to the PNDHD, and to conduct a contamination baseline assessment, non-technical survey, and EORE.⁵⁹

45 Statement of Mauritania, APMBBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 20–22 June 2022.

46 Email from Lubna Allam, Programme Officer, GICHD, 10 June 2022.

47 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.

48 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, pp. 9–10.

49 Ibid, pp. 14–15.

50 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), pp. 13–14.

51 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 12.

52 Email from Alioune O. Mohamed El Hacen, PNDHD, 17 April 2011; and Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, pp. 5 and 8.

53 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, pp. 5 and 8.

54 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Annex II.

55 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

56 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 9; and Mauritania's answers to the CCM Analysis Group, 29 July 2021, p. 2.

57 Email from Roxana Bobolicu, MAG, 19 July 2022.

58 MAG website, accessed on 28 May 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3NFVEKD>.

59 Email from Roxana Bobolicu, MAG, 19 July 2022.

Mauritania requires a clearance capacity of eight teams, each of ten deminers, sustained for about five years to technically survey and clear the mined areas. The teams are expected to work for 250 days a year, and each team is expected to clear 250m² a day.⁶⁰ Mauritania also said it will consider the use of mine detection dogs (MDDs) in Nouadhibou where there is a potential presence of conventionally undetectable or deeply buried mines.⁶¹

At the end of 2021, the PNDHD had four demining teams, five cars, and one ambulance. The total number of personnel was not reported.⁶²

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2021

For 2021, Mauritania reported release through clearance of 1.2km² of mined area.⁶³ The number of mines destroyed was not reported and as at September 2022, Mauritania had yet to submit its Article 7 report covering 2021.

SURVEY IN 2021

Mauritania conducted both technical and non-technical surveys in 2021, but these did not result in any land release in 2021, although additional mined area was identified.⁶⁴

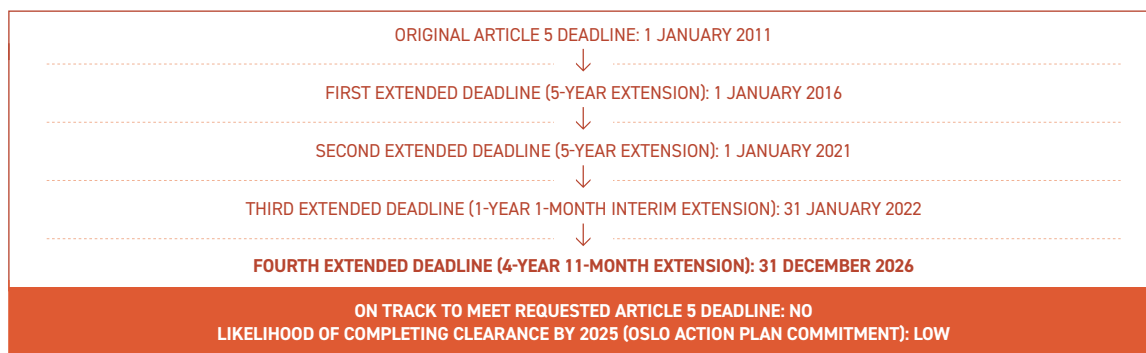
CLEARANCE IN 2021

The PNDHD cleared 1.2km² of anti-personnel mined area in the region of Dakhlet Nouadhibou in 2021.⁶⁵ The number of anti-personnel mines destroyed, if any, is unknown.

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2021⁶⁶

Region	Operator	Area cleared (m ²)
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	PNDHD	1,203,880
Total		1,203,880

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the latest extension granted by States Parties in 2021), 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 the end of 2026. Mauritania is unlikely to meet this deadline.

Mauritania's Article 5 deadline has already been extended four times and it previously declared fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations at the 17MSP in November 2018, but in June 2020, submitted an interim extension request, reporting that it had discovered new mined areas in the regions of Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Tiris Zemmour, and Adrar.⁶⁷ Mauritania said it needed a one-year interim period, through to 31 January 2022, to better understand the contamination, collect more information and be in a better position to submit its "final" request for extension. In June 2021, Mauritania submitted its fourth extension request seeking a new deadline of 31 December 2026.

60 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 10; NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 11; and email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 26 April 2021.

61 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 13.

62 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustapha ould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Third Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2020, p. 2; Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 3; and online presentation by Mauritania, Intersessional Meetings, 2 July 2020, available at: <http://bit.ly/3iBV1Dd>.

The five-year period sought based on an operational capacity of eight demining teams, working for 250 days a year and each team clearing 250m² per day, meaning clearance of half a square kilometre a year. The period also estimates a final reduction of CHAs by an average 37%.⁶⁸ Further, the almost five-year estimated period includes all mined area, including the 5.15km² containing only anti-vehicle mines which does not fall under the APMBC. On the other hand, Mauritania's extension request does not consider the time needed to bring in and register international operators, or the time needed to set up the groundwork before commencing clearance, which can take up to one year.⁶⁹ Mauritania factored in the first six months of 2022 to complete its resource mobilisation,⁷⁰ but as at July 2022, only MAG has secured funding from Norway for mine action⁷¹ but the funds do not include mine clearance.

Mauritania is working on the bold assumption that no or limited additional contamination will be discovered in the course of the coming four years.⁷²

Mauritania has requested US\$9.65 million of financial support, including an initial investment of US\$650,000 to

purchase vehicles, detectors, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other field equipment. In addition, an annual budget of US\$1.8 million for five years was requested to cover running costs.⁷³ The government of Mauritania will contribute staff, provide office space, and coordinate the clearance operation.⁷⁴

Mauritania participated in an individualised approach initiative meeting with the support of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance on 17 June 2021. Mauritania also appealed for international support during the APMBC Intersessional Meetings in June 2022, as well as the CCM Intersessional Meetings and Tenth Meeting of States Parties in 2022.

Mauritania committed in 2021 to keeping States Parties informed of developments at treaty meetings and through its Article 7 reporting,⁷⁵ and to "coordinate with the relevant authorities, to the extent possible, on areas that lie outside of Mauritanian jurisdiction but under its de-facto control".⁷⁶ But as at September 2022 it had yet to submit its latest Article 7 report.

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

In its Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, submitted in June 2021, Mauritania reported that it will "continue to strengthen and maintain a capacity in-country that is equipped to deal with residual risk", and that in the event of discovering new contamination after the newly proposed deadline, Mauritania will "as soon as possible take action to accurately identify the extent of the contaminated areas identified and destroy all mines found in accordance with international and national standards".⁷⁷

In the same request, Mauritania made clear that it may discover additional contamination in the course of the five-year clearance period and beyond. According to its statement: "In an area as large as the deserts of Mauritania, with both vast areas and very limited population numbers, it has always been known that in the future additional previously unknown contamination could be identified. Even when the previously known and newly identified areas are cleared this time, it is still possible that new currently unknown areas of mine contamination may be identified in the future".

Since the closure of NPA's programme in 2015, additional contaminated areas were identified, surveyed, and cleared by the PNDHD with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support.⁷⁸ The PNDHD, despite its limited capacity, continued to survey and clear contamination in 2021. 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.⁷⁹ It subsequently confirmed its commitment to building national capacity to address any residual contamination.⁸⁰

68 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 10; NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 11; and email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 26 April 2021.

69 Interview with Hans Risser and Melissa Andersson, NPA, 19 April 2021.

70 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 9.

71 Email from Roxana Bobolicu, MAG, 19 July 2022.

72 Fourth Article 5 deadline Extension Request, June 2021, p. 3.

73 Ibid., p. 11.

74 Ibid., p. 12.

75 Ibid., p. 12.

76 Ibid., p. 13.

77 Ibid., p. 11.

78 NPA, Mauritania Assessment Report, 12 April 2021, p. 4.

79 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.

80 Email from Lt-Colonel Moustaphaould Cheikhna, PNDHD, 15 March 2022.