

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- China should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a state party to the APMBC, China has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.

ANTI-PERSONNEL
MINE CONTAMINATION

The extent of mine contamination remaining in China is not known. In the 1990s, the United States reported that China had emplaced mines along its borders with India, the Russian Federation, and Vietnam.¹ China's military estimated that around two million mines of a wide variety of types were emplaced on the Vietnam border alone.² China has not reported on mine contamination along its borders with Russia and India or on operations to clear them.

China conducted clearance operations along its border with Vietnam between 1992 and 1999,³ between 2005 and 2009,⁴ and between 2015 and 2018.⁵ In 2009, China said it had completed demining along the Yunnan section of its border with Vietnam and that this "represents the completion of mine clearance of mine-affected areas within China's territory."⁶ This was followed by a statement in 2011 when a Foreign Ministry official reported that China maintains a small number of minefields "for national defence".⁷ Two months later, at the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties, China said that large-scale demining activities had "on the whole eliminated the scourge of landmines in our territories".⁸ At the Maputo Review Conference in 2014, China said it had "basically eradicated landmines on its own territory".⁹

Demining of the Vietnam border was conducted in three 'campaigns' in Yunnan province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The first was in 1992–94 and the second in 1997–99.¹⁰ However, these two campaigns did not deal with minefields located in disputed areas of the border, where

500,000 mines covered an estimated 40km². After a technical survey of mined areas, China embarked on a third clearance campaign in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan province in 2005. China stated in 2009 that it had completed clearance of this border after clearing a total of 5.15km².¹¹

In early November 2015, however, China embarked on a further demining operation along the border with Vietnam.¹² In its Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II Article 13 transparency report submitted in March 2017, China reported that in November 2015–February 2017, the Chinese army cleared 18.4km² of minefields on the Yunnan border.¹³

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no formal mine action programme in China. Any mine clearance is conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as a military activity.

LAND RELEASE

Media accounts reported that mine clearance resumed in November 2017 in the Yunnan border area and in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.¹⁴ Clearance was reportedly completed in November 2018, with 2,300 explosive items found and destroyed across 1.5km² in Guangxi province.¹⁵ In Yunnan province an estimated 200,000 explosive items were found and destroyed in over 50km² of mined area between November 2015 and November 2018.¹⁶

1 US Department of State, "Hidden Killers 1994", Washington, DC, September 1998, p. 18, and Table A-1.

2 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", Xinhua, 31 December 2008, at: on.china.cn/31F8D7u.

3 Ministry of Defence, "Post-war Demining Operations in China", December 1999, p. 11. Before the clearance operations, there were said to be more than 560 minefields covering a total area of more than 300km².

4 Interview with Shen Jian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, 1 April 2008; and Huizi and Yun, "Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border", Xinhua, 31 December 2008.

5 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", Xinhua, 16 November 2018, at: bit.ly/2yYXXnL.

6 Statement of China, Second Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

7 Email from Lai Haiyang, Attaché, Department of Arms Control & Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 2011.

8 Statement of China, APMBC 11th Meeting of States Parties, Phnom Penh, 29 November 2011.

9 Statement of China, Third APMBC Review Conference, Maputo, 26 June 2014.

10 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", Xinhua, 31 December 2008.

11 Statement of China, Second APMBC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

12 P. Scally, "Huge land mine clearance underway in Wenshan, Honghe", Blog post, Gokunming, 5 November 2015, at: bit.ly/20WbdVe.

13 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (for 2016), Form B. Unofficial translation.

14 "Land mine removal resumes on border", China Daily, 29 November 2017, at: bit.ly/2ZXUwtr; and "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", China Daily, 26 November 2018, at: bit.ly/33xCdNT.

15 "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", China Daily, 26 November 2018, at: bit.ly/33xCdNT.

16 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", Xinhua, 16 November 2018, at: bit.ly/2yYXXnL.