

Convention on Cluster Munitions

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Presentation of requests for extension of deadlines submitted under Article 4 of the Convention and of the analysis of these requests

Analysis and draft decision of Afghanistan's deadline extension request under article 4.1 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Submitted by the Analysis Group for Article 4 Extension Requests – Italy, France, Netherlands, and Switzerland*, **

I. Background

1. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 3 December 2008 and ratified it on 8 September 2011. The Convention entered into force for it on 1 March 2012. In its initial transparency report, submitted on 30 August 2012, Afghanistan indicated a total of 7.6 km² of cluster munition contaminated area in three regions of the country.

2. Under Article 4 of the Convention, Afghanistan is obliged to clear and destroy or ensure the clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants (CMR) located in cluster munition contaminated areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible and no later than 1 March 2022. On 3 August 2021, Afghanistan submitted a request to extend its Article 4 deadline for four years. The request was granted by the Second Review Conference, setting Afghanistan's new Article 4 deadline to 1 March 2026.

II. Consideration of the request

3. On 12 December 2024, Afghanistan officially submitted its second request to extend the Article 4 deadline by two years, until 1 March 2028. Acting on behalf of the 13MSP President, the ISU informed States Parties of the submission on the same day. The request was subsequently published on the CCM website and transmitted to the Analysis Group for consideration.

4. The Analysis Group invited representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), Mine Action Review, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) to a meeting on 22 January 2025 to support the review of the extension request.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The present document was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.

As per established practice, the Analysis Group used the procedure established in the document “Methodology for requests of deadline extensions under Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions” (CCM/MSP/2019/12) that was adopted at the 9MSP to analyse Afghanistan’s extension request.

5. Following the meeting, on 12 February the Analysis Group requested additional information and clarifications from Afghanistan to support further consideration of its extension request. In response, on 13 March Afghanistan submitted a revised request along with detailed answers to the Group’s questions. Subsequently, on 15 May, the Analysis Group provided further comments and submitted its final observations. On 31 May, Afghanistan presented an updated extension request, stating that – based on the Group’s feedback and final observations, and taking into account MAPA’s current capacity, existing funding shortfalls, and recent changes in funding – it was formally seeking a three-year extension of its Article 4 deadline, until 1 March 2029, instead of the initially requested two-year period.

6. At the time the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) entered into force for Afghanistan, 1 March 2012, twenty-one cluster munition contaminated areas covering 7.6 km² had been identified. Since then, an additional thirty cluster munition contaminated sites covering 17.4 km² were discovered through village-by-village survey. From 2012 to 2024, a total of 16.83 km² were released (16,241,267 m² cleared, 585,770 m² cancelled through Non-Technical Survey), resulting in the destruction of 10,333 cluster munitions and submunitions. The request includes a breakdown of CM/submunitions destroyed by year (2012-2024).

7. At the end of the current extension period, a total of sixteen confirmed hazardous areas covering 8,988,997 m² will remain to be addressed, located in the Paktya, Samangan, Nangarhar and Bamyan provinces. Technical Surveys, using the cluster munition remnant survey (CMRS) methodology, will be conducted in line with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) Technical note on Mine Action (TNMA 08.20/02) to determine the precise extent of contamination and allow for area reduction. Afghanistan also specifies that the possibility of identifying additional CMR-contaminated areas remains, as village-by-village surveys are ongoing and are planned for completion by December 2026. In case of discovering additional contaminated sites, the clearance plan will be adjusted accordingly and shared in a timely manner.

8. Afghanistan is requesting a three-year extension of its Article 4 deadline, from 1 March 2026 to 28 February 2029, due to persistent funding shortfalls, particularly following the political transition in August 2021, and operational limitations imposed by seasonal weather. Based on an average productivity of 60,000 m² per team per month, the clearance plan foresees deploying six teams in year one, five teams in year two, and four teams in year three, each consisting of 1 x Team Leader (EOD Level 3 qualified), 2 x Section Leaders (EOD Level 2 qualified), and 10 x deminers/operators. These will work in rotation across 10.5 months annually, depending on climate and terrain conditions.

9. Afghanistan provides detailed information on projected annual outputs—3.78 million m² in year one, 2.88 million m² in year two, and 2.32 million m² in year three—as well as on its land release methodology, which includes Non-Technical Survey (NTS), Technical Survey (TS), and full clearance, in accordance with national and international standards. The request clarifies that, although Technical Survey (TS) was not used in past cluster munition clearance due to earlier policy, recent data analysis prompted DMAC and partners to adopt TS (through the CMRS methodology) for all battlefield and CM sites going forward. In this respect, DMAC and MATC, with support of partners, plan to conduct land release training, including on IMAS-TNMA 08.20/02 on Cluster Munition Remnant Survey, in order to apply land release principles effectively (as per page 3 of the Extension Request).

10. Environmental impact assessments are mandatory under Afghanistan’s national standard (AMAS) on environmental management, and priority is given to addressing contamination on slopes and gullies where explosive remnants risk being washed down. Burning of vegetation has been discontinued, and the use of machinery with harmful environmental impact has been halted. Teams are trained in environmental protection SOPs and apply mitigation measures throughout operations, including basecamp management, waste handling, and vehicle maintenance.

11. Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) activities are planned for the duration of the new extension and prioritized based on community impact assessments and accident data, targeting the most at-risk groups such as children and returnees from neighbouring countries. Messages are delivered by accredited teams (often including female staff) through direct sessions, community mapping, and materials distribution. Pre- and post-assessments are used to measure knowledge improvement and safe behaviour promotion. Coordination with humanitarian actors and national authorities ensures broad coverage, especially in returnee transit areas. Currently, there are sixteen EORE accredited national and international organizations conducting EORE activities throughout Afghanistan, including eight organizations accredited only in EORE.

12. Afghanistan provides details on its national mine action standards (AMAS), established in 2006, all of which are undergoing review to be completed between April and August 2025. A national mine action strategic plan (2025–2030) has also been developed and included in the national strategic plan of disaster management. The strategy is under translation and the English version was planned to be launched in August 2025.

13. Consideration of gender and diversity is one of the goals in Afghanistan's drafted National Mine Action Strategy and the programme will make efforts to consider gender and diversity throughout mine action programming and implementation. All implementing partners have dedicated focal points, and programming considers the specific needs of women, men, children, and other vulnerable groups. EORE and Victim Assistance projects include female staff to effectively reach women and girls in affected communities. Gender-sensitive approaches are tailored to local norms, including deploying couple teams for outreach and involving women and diverse groups in community liaison and survey activities.

14. The total estimated budget for the extension period is approximately USD 2,224,777. While Afghanistan aims to contribute to implementation through national coordination and oversight structures, the level of the national contribution remains unclear and will be communicated as soon as available. International assistance will, therefore, remain critical.

15. MAPA has established a resource mobilization team divided into three groups focusing, respectively, on national sources, potential regional donors, and United Nations agencies and international donors. Each group has mapped potential funding sources and initiated outreach, with follow-up meetings planned to strengthen these efforts. Considering the difficult financial situation, with currently no confirmed donors, the request indicates possible avenues for donors to assist Afghanistan's mine action activities in the requested extension. These include support to national mine action organizations directly or through International Trust Funds or support to international mine action organizations. In this regard, the request also lists the 35 implementing agencies (including national and international EORE and victim assistance organisations) currently active in the country.

III. Conclusions

16. The Analysis Group commends Afghanistan for submitting a high-quality extension request, which meets the criteria outlined in the "Methodology for requests of deadline extensions under Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions" document (CCM/MSP/2019/12) adopted at the 9MSP. It also acknowledges Afghanistan's continued engagement to fulfilling its obligations under Article 4 of the Convention and commends its constructive engagement and responsiveness to the Group's feedback.

17. The Analysis Group notes with appreciation that the request presents a clear work plan, specifying projected outputs per year and methods to be employed, which are aligned with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The Group especially notes that the activity plan reflects the necessary adaptations due to climate and weather conditions and the implementation of measures to prevent adverse impacts on the environment.

18. The Analysis Group also welcomes the detailed and clear information concerning the review of national standards (AMAS) aligned with the IMAS; the implementation of EORE programmes and integration of gender considerations.

19. The Analysis Group notes that the number of contaminated areas could increase as a result of ongoing survey activities. In this regard, the Group welcomes Afghanistan's commitment to informing the States Parties of relevant developments and to adjusting the work plan as needed.

20. The Analysis Group also welcomes the clear information provided in the request concerning overall expected budget for implementation of the work plan, Afghanistan's commitment to continue supporting Article 4 implementation with national resources – even if the exact level is currently uncertain – and on the structures that have been put in place to mobilize international assistance.

21. The Analysis Group notes with concern that there are currently no confirmed donors to support Afghanistan's Article 4 implementation, acknowledging that international assistance remains crucial for the State Party's implementation of the work plan outlined in the request. In this context, the Group especially welcomes Afghanistan's indication of possible avenues for international assistance to be channelled – to national implementing organizations directly or through International Trust Funds or to international implementing organizations.

22. The Analysis Group notes that the Convention would benefit from Afghanistan reporting annually through its Article 7 reports on the following:

- (a) Progress made on the implementation of the work plan provided in its extension request;
- (b) Updated information on the remaining contamination after the conclusion of ongoing survey and an updated work plan based on the new information gathered;
- (c) Updated information on its funding situation including finances allocated through the national budget and from international donors;
- (d) Other relevant information.

23. The Analysis Group notes the importance, in addition to Afghanistan reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of Afghanistan keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments as necessary.

IV. Draft Decision on the Article 4 Extension Request submitted by Afghanistan

24. The Meeting assessed the request submitted by Afghanistan for an extension of its deadline for completing the clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants in accordance with Article 4.1 of the Convention, agreeing to grant the request for an extension until 1 March 2029.

25. In granting the request, the Meeting noted that the total area confirmed to be contaminated could increase, as village-to-village survey is ongoing. The Meeting also noted Afghanistan's intention to inform the States Parties of relevant developments in this regard and adapt the work plan as needed.

26. In granting the request, the Meeting noted that, while international assistance is crucial for Afghanistan's completion of its Article 4 obligations, there are currently no confirmed donors to support Afghanistan's efforts. In this context, the Meeting underlines Afghanistan's proposed avenues to continue supporting the country's full implementation of the Convention.

27. In this regard, the Meeting noted that the Convention would benefit from reporting annually through its Article 7 reports on the following:

- (a) Progress made on the implementation of the work plan provided in its extension request;
- (b) Updated information on the remaining contamination after the conclusion of ongoing survey and an updated work plan based on the new information gathered;

(c) Updated information on its funding situation including finances allocated through the national budget and from international donors;

(d) Other relevant information.

28. The Analysis Group notes the importance, in addition to Afghanistan reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of Afghanistan keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments as necessary.

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