

Convention on Cluster Munitions

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Item 9 of the agenda

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 Mauritania'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 Mauritania signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 19 April 2010 and ratified it on 1 February 2012. The Convention entered into force for it on 1 August 2012. In its initial transparency report, submitted on 20 March 2013, Mauritania reported a total of 10.2 km² of cluster munition contaminated area.
2. Under Article 4 of the Convention, Mauritania was 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 August 2022. On 30 June 2021, Mauritania submitted its first extension request to the President of the Second Review Conference, requesting a two-year extension of its Article 4 deadline. The request was granted, extending the deadline to 1 August 2024. On 5 July 2023, Mauritania submitted a second extension request to the President of the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties, seeking an additional two-year extension. The request was granted, setting Mauritania's new Article 4 deadline at 1 August 2026.

II. Consideration of the request

3. On 26 December 2024, Mauritania officially submitted its third request to extend the Article 4 deadline by two years, until 1 August 2028. Acting on behalf of the 13MSP President, the ISU informed States Parties of the submission on 7 January 2025. 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 28 January 2025 to join them in considering the 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 Mauritania’s extension request.

5. Following that meeting, on 19 February, the Analysis Group requested additional information/clarifications from Mauritania to facilitate further consideration of its request. On 19 March Mauritania submitted a revised extension request to the Analysis Group. On 16 May, the Analysis Group requested further additional feedback and submitted final observations to Mauritania. On 28 May, Mauritania submitted an updated extension request and its national standards document. Clarifications were received, in response to the Group’s final observations.

6. At the time the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) entered into force for Mauritania, on 1 August 2012, 9 cluster munition contaminated areas covering 10,180,108 m² were identified. Since then, an additional 16,869,114 m² of cluster munition contaminated areas have been discovered. From the Convention’s entry into force, Mauritania has cleared a total of 11,876,157 m² of cluster munition remnants, representing 49.95% of the contamination discovered to date. A total of 1,395 cluster munitions and submunitions have been destroyed.

7. A total of 15 173 065m² remain to be addressed, comprising 9 confirmed and 1 suspected hazard areas.

8. Mauritania is requesting a two-year extension, from 1 August 2026 to 1 August 2028, mainly due to limited international financial support and the discovery of previously unknown cluster munition contamination in 2019. Without international assistance, Mauritania anticipates that completing clearance before the current deadline of August 1, 2026, will not be possible.

9. The request outlines planned activities, which include Non-Technical Survey, Technical Survey, clearance, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and marking. The clearance plan anticipates an initial three-month mobilization period to secure funding, assemble skilled personnel, and acquire essential equipment. Four Battle Area Clearance (BAC) teams will be deployed, each consisting of five members (with EOD1, 2 and 3 qualification) affiliated with the National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (PNDHD) and with prior experience in the military Engineer Corps. If sufficient funds are available, up to seven clearance teams could be managed. Clearance operations adhere to the National Mine Action Standards, known nationally as les Normes Mauritaniennes de l’Action Antimines (NOMAM), which align with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

10. The estimated daily capacity of a deminer is 258 to 600 m², leading to a daily team capacity of 1032 to 2400 m². Mauritania underlines that these figures are preliminary, as several factors might affect productivity rates, including terrain nature, weather conditions, density and type of contamination. With these caveats, Mauritania estimates that clearing the currently identified contamination would take approximately 18 months, with an additional six months allocated for any further contamination discovered and for final reporting. Should only national resources and capacities be available, the time frame will extend to around ten years (1 area/year).

11. The total estimated budget for the proposed three-year extension period is approximately USD 2,955,000. Mauritania commits to a governmental contribution of USD 540,000 for the extension period (USD 180,000 per year), which covers salaries for deminers and team leaders. The remaining USD 2,415,000 is required from the international community. The request also provides details on the material, personnel and training requirements.

12. Mauritania is open to the channelling of international assistance through international organizations, provided that the PNDHD remains in charge and local capacities are used. It also plans to re-engage previous donors by forming a National Coalition of government, donors, and international NGOs tasked to coordinate expertise and resources to complete demining and support victims in the framework of CCM implementation.

13. The PNDHD mobilizes five-person risk education teams to communities affected by cluster munitions, conducting in-person training sessions with a specific emphasis on school-aged children. Community liaison officers also provide training to local community focal points, and the program organizes training for trainer sessions among local associations and NGOs for broader reach. Despite these efforts, a lack of resources has historically hindered the implementation of risk education, as the annual contribution from the Mauritanian government to the PNDHD can only partially cover its costs. Consequently, of the total USD 2,415,000 requested from the international community, USD 360,000 is earmarked for risk education.

14. Gender and diversity are integrated into Mauritania's mine action program, which aims to engage all segments of the population in the design and implementation of activities such as risk education campaigns, discussion groups, and international meetings. A gender focal point/advisor supports teams in planning activities to ensure gender considerations and promote inclusion, especially in demining and risk education. The program strives for gender balance in survey and battle area clearance teams, acknowledging potential limitations with seconded military staff.

III. Conclusions

15. The Analysis Group commends Mauritania for submitting a clear and comprehensive extension request, which generally 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 Mauritania's constructive engagement with the Analysis Group and responsiveness to its feedback.

16. The Analysis Group notes with appreciation that the request includes an overall clear plan for activities with estimated clearance productivity rates. The Group also acknowledges that these are preliminary, as they are affected by several factors such as the nature of the terrain, weather conditions, density and type of contamination.

17. The Analysis Group also notes that, since entry into force of the Convention, Mauritania has been able to release a significant portion of the confirmed hazard areas through reduction through Technical Survey – something that the request indicates could be repeated in the requested extension. In relation to both this and the previous point, the Analysis Group emphasizes the importance of Mauritania keeping the States Parties informed of relevant developments and their implications on the work plan and timeline presented in the request as the activities progress.

18. The Analysis Group welcomes the clear information on available national capacities to conduct Non-Technical Survey, Technical Survey and clearance and that these adhere to the Mauritanian Standards of Antimine Action (NOMAM), which align with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

19. The Analysis Group notes with appreciation that marking and risk education activities are included in the work plan to ensure the safety of civilians. The Group also recognizes that risk education activities can be limited if only reliant on national support. In this regard, the Group greatly welcomes the inclusion of a budget line dedicated to risk education activities in the summary of international assistance required to implement operations in the requested extension.

20. The Analysis Group notes that international assistance is critical for the full implementation of the work plan outlined in the request and notes with concern that Mauritania has been unable to draw international support for CMR clearance since 2012-2013. In this regard, the Group welcomes Mauritania's proposal to establish a National Coalition of government, donors, and international NGOs tasked to coordinate expertise and resources to complete demining and support victims. It also welcomes Mauritania's openness to assistance being channelled through international organizations, provided that the PNDHD remains in charge and local capacities are used.

21. The Analysis Group also welcomes that gender and diversity are considered in Mauritania's mine action program, including through support by a gender focal point/advisor to ensure gender and diversity are considered, especially in demining and risk education. The Group encourages the PNDHD to consider elaborating a gender and diversity policy and implementation plan for its mine action programme, to further enhance gender mainstreaming.

22. The Analysis Group notes that the Convention would benefit from Mauritania reporting annually through its Article 7 reports and at Meetings of States Parties or Review Conferences on the following:

- (a) Progress made on the implementation of the work plan provided in its extension request;
- (b) Updated information on remaining cluster munition contamination based on the findings of the non-technical and technical survey;
- (c) Updated information on resource mobilization efforts, including on the establishment of the National Coalition tasked to coordinate expertise and resources to complete demining and support victims;
- (d) Other relevant information.

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

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

24. The Meeting assessed the request submitted by Mauritania 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 August 2028.

25. In granting the request, the Meeting noted that international assistance is critical for the full implementation of the work plan outlined in the request and noted with concern that Mauritania has been unable to draw international support for CMR clearance since 2012-2013. In this regard, the Meeting commended Mauritania for its intention to establish a National Coalition also involving donors and external partners to support resource mobilization. The meeting also acknowledged that, should international assistance not materialize, Mauritania will be unable to progress according to the timeline presented in the request.

26. In granting the request, the Meeting noted that progress as outlined in the activity plan is also conditional on factors such as weather conditions, type and density of contamination but also on the possibility of area reductions through the implementation of technical surveys.

27. In granting the request, the Meeting noted with appreciation that the activity plan and related budget include risk education. It also acknowledged that, without international support, these activities can only be partially funded through the national budget.

28. In granting the request, the Meeting also welcomed that gender and diversity are considered in the request and invite Mauritania to develop a specific policy and plan in that regard.

29. In this regard, the Meeting noted that the Convention would benefit from Mauritania reporting annually through its Article 7 reports and at Meetings of States Parties or Review Conferences on the following:

- (a) Progress made on the implementation of the work plan provided in its extension request;
- (b) Updated information on remaining cluster munition contamination based on the findings of the non-technical and technical survey;

(c) Updated information on resource mobilization efforts, including on the establishment of the National Coalition tasked to coordinate expertise and resources to complete demining and support victims;

(d) Other relevant information.

30. The Meeting also noted the importance, in addition to Mauritania reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of Mauritania keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments as necessary.

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