

Colombia Extension Request – ICBL Comments at ISC

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

We want to thank Colombia for submitting this extensive request, and on time. This is Colombia's second request for extending its clearance deadline. It contains detailed information on the mine action efforts carried out over the past 9 years (since the first extension request was granted) and a plan for the additional 4 years and 10 months Colombia is requesting this year.

The overall extent of the contamination remains unknown due to area access restrictions associated with security reasons and will require further efforts to gain access to and establish a baseline.

While we appreciate Colombia is not asking for time beyond 2025, it is unclear whether Colombia intends to address all existing contamination in the country within the requested period. Does Colombia intend to clear the contamination in both the 156 accessible municipalities AND the 166 inaccessible municipalities by 2025? And if clearance in the 166 inaccessible municipalities is not included, can Colombia clarify what the plan is to address these remaining areas?

Among positive points of the request we note the following:

- Colombia has made significant progress in terms of gaining understanding of its remaining contamination, clearing a significant amount of land (54% of accessible assigned communities have been cleared), and in regard to overall management of its mine action programme in the past nine years;
- There is a work plan for the 156 municipalities with ongoing demining operations;
- A plan and budget for mine risk education is included in the request;
- Close to 30% of funding for mine action will come from the national budget.

The points that require additional clarification are as follows:

- The request presents how much land was cleared in the 156 accessible municipalities to date. However, it is unclear whether any land was actually released through survey. Colombia should clarify this by reporting land release disaggregated by Non-Technical Survey, Technical Survey and clearance;
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the plan for the remaining tasks within the 156 accessible municipalities. In addition to 3.3 km² of confirmed contamination (CHA) left to be cleared, there is an estimated 4.9 km² of suspected contamination (SHA) that has not yet been surveyed. This indicates a combined total of 8.2km² still to be addressed in the accessible municipalities. Will both the confirmed hazardous areas and the suspected hazardous areas in the 156 municipalities be addressed during this extension period? Colombia should provide clear information in this regard;

- In the 166 municipalities that are currently inaccessible due to insecurity, no survey or clearance has taken place and thus no baseline established. The request refers to a re-evaluation of the security context in 2023, as well as a 'micro-targeting methodology' planned for 2024-25 aimed at establishing an estimate of contamination in the inaccessible municipalities. Colombia should provide clarification on how this process will work and whether it intends to clear the remaining 166 municipalities before 2025;
- In conjunction, it would be useful if Colombia provided more information on the ongoing dialogue processes with armed groups and the implementation of the peace agreement. In particular it would be useful to hear what the likelihood of settlement and gaining access to the 166 municipalities is within the next 5 years;
- Colombia presented a clear budget (both total and annual), indicating that some 70% of required funding will need to come from the donor community. Colombia should clarify the amount that has already been secured from the government and donors, and present a resource mobilization strategy for the additional funding required.

Thank you.