

Turkey's draft Extension Request – ICBL Comments
Intersessional Meetings, 22-24 June 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair,

We thank Turkey for submitting its draft request and presenting it today. Turkey has requested an extension of 3 years and 9 months until 31 December 2025, although it states that it will need an extension beyond 2025.

While Turkey's contamination remains massive after 17 years since the treaty's entry into force for Turkey, we regret that Turkey appears to have abandoned its goal of a mine-free Turkey by 2025, adopted just last year in its national Strategic Mine Action Plan. We encourage Turkey to step up its clearance efforts and aim at completion by 2025.

The contamination to be cleared is along Turkey's borders and also in its interior. In 2019, at least 62 casualties occurred in Turkey, of which 24 were civilians and 38 were military personnel. This represents a sharp increase from previous years and is also of concern as many of the casualties were caused by improvised mines.

We urge Turkey to address contamination with humanitarian impact as a priority, both on the borders and in other areas where civilians are impacted. Turkey should also detail and address the growing problem caused by improvised mines within its extension request, as per Action#21 of the OAP.

We note that Turkey plans to conduct NTS to produce a more accurate contamination baseline, which may result in a reduction of as much as 40% of the current contamination estimate in some areas. It is projected that this will be completed by the end of 2023. Two out of the three main clearance projects, as well as the Mine Risk Education Plan, are also foreseen for the period up to 2023.

With this in mind, we recommend that Turkey requests an extension to the end of 2023, and then with its accurate baseline, Turkey should develop a targeted clearance plan for the remaining contamination, beyond 2023. We hope that with a reduction in the size of contaminated areas, Turkey will make every effort to develop a clearance plan for completion by 2025.

The request requires the inclusion of annual plans with clear survey and clearance projections as required by the OAP Action#19 and Action#23, so that progress can be tracked clearly. The annual plans should include the survey and clearance capacity required and annual budget.

Turkey also needs to provide a more detailed, costed, multi-year workplan for risk education for populations near the interior minefields as well as those impacted on the borders, targeting in particular boys, men and refugees as the groups most at risk, in line with Action#24 of the OAP. Contamination by improvised mines should also be addressed within risk education plans.

Turkey has presented a budget for each key project and internal and external funding resources. It will be helpful for Turkey to clarify what funding is secured and the plan for mobilizing the additional required resources.

We sincerely hope that Turkey will stay true to its ambitions and to the collective goal set by States Parties to make every effort to complete clearance of mined areas by 2025.

We will share more detailed comments and questions on the request directly with Turkey.

Thank you.