

## Comments on Yemen's Extension Request



### Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, 25-29 November 2019

Yemen is one of the most tragic stories. Country which was on track to soon become mine-free, today is gravely contaminated by landmines, primarily improvised mines, and ERW which have killed and maimed thousands of civilians, including children, and prevented much-needed humanitarian aid. We are outraged by the widespread use of landmines by Houthi forces since 2017 and call for an immediate halt to use of this weapon, credible investigation and punishment of the perpetrators.

We recognize that the Yemen mine action program under YEMAC has been operating under extremely challenging circumstances and high pressure since the outbreak of the conflict, focusing on emergency mine action interventions and risk education. At the moment, the extent and precise locations of contamination in Yemen are mostly unknown. However, by the number and locations of recorded casualties it seems to be very extensive.

#### **Among positive points of the presented request, we see the following:**

- Since it is not in a position to determine the current extent of mine contamination, Yemen is rightly requesting a short interim extension of three years in order to re-establish its mine action program and get a clearer understanding of the scope and nature of the problem.
- Yemen's plan seems to be logical - the principal planned activity will be a nation-wide non-technical survey aimed at establishing a new baseline which should allow the development of a realistic plan to address remaining contamination;
- In addition, while continuing its ongoing mine action emergency response, as part of the 2020-23 plan, Yemen intends to strengthen its prioritization system, develop revised national mine action standards, strengthen the information management system, and establish a nation-wide mine action coordination body (Yemen Mine Action Coordination Cell -YMACC).

#### **Among points that will require further attention and follow-up, we see the following:**

- Considering the high number of casualties, it is crucial Yemen does all it can to carry out effective risk education and reduction programs and other

efforts to ensure exclusion of civilians from mined areas, and reports on these efforts.

- YEMAC needs to ensure that Risk Education programs and materials are inclusive, gender, age, and disability sensitive, and that they prioritize groups most at risk such as children, frontline workers, farmers, IDPs, and others.
- YEMAC should cooperate with other risk education actors and standardize safety messages and monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the best standards of response.
- YEMAC needs to also address the high number of casualties among deminers by providing adequate training and equipment.
- YEMAC should develop an annual work plan to address priority regions and tasks, which would clearly demonstrate when and where specific activities would take place and with what assets.
- Yemen indicated a very considerable amount of funding required to implement its three-year plan. However, it did not share any information on how it intends to mobilize these resources. Yemen needs to urgently undertake efforts to secure all needed funding. Those who do provide financial support to YEMAC should do it through the available international mechanisms and ensure that any bilaterally funded operator is tasked by and reports to the national authority.
- It is also crucial that Yemen facilitates engagement with international operators to gain access to expertise, training and equipment for survey and clearance.
- YEMAC should do all it can to adapt a comprehensive approach to mine action by integrating victim assistance along its land clearance, risk education and advocacy efforts.
- Lastly, YEMAC needs to improve its data collection, including disaggregated data on mine and ERW clearance and bring its land release standards in line with IMAS.

We remain deeply concerned about the daily safety of people and communities in Yemen, deminers risking their lives, and we share our sincere sympathy with all affected.

We appeal to all to put an immediate end to mine use, and to provide quick access to all affected areas, which should be marked, surveyed and cleared urgently.

Lastly, we thank YEMAC for its ongoing life-saving work and we ask the international community to provide all necessary assistance to support its efforts.