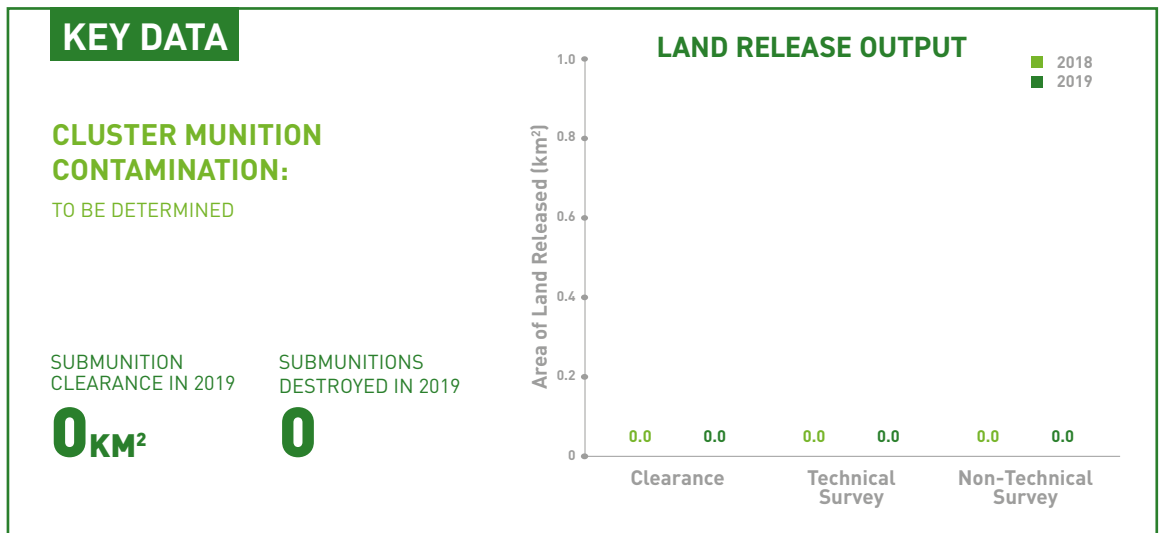


**ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 AUGUST 2022**  
UNCLEAR WHETHER ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Having previously declared fulfilment of its Article 4 obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) in September 2013 at the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Mauritania reported in its CCM Article 7 transparency report covering 2019 that it had discovered previously unknown cluster munition-contaminated areas under its jurisdiction or control. Once circumstances regarding the COVID-19 pandemic permit, the National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD) plans to conduct an assessment of suspected and confirmed cluster munition-contaminated areas, along with newly reported mined areas, with the support of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Mauritania should clarify whether the cluster munition-contaminated areas in question are currently under Mauritania's effective control. If so, and they are also under its jurisdiction, the authorities should proceed to undertake an assessment mission with NPA as soon as funding and restrictions regarding COVID-19 permit. If, however, the areas are under Mauritania's effective control but not under its jurisdiction, discussions need to be held as a matter of urgency with others concerned, in particular Morocco and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.
- Mauritania should confirm whether the identified areas are newly discovered or if any of the areas were already recorded as contaminated but were previously thought to be not under Mauritania's jurisdiction or control.
- Mauritania should report more accurately and consistently on the extent of cluster munition remnant (CMR) contamination, including using the classification of suspected hazardous area (SHA) and confirmed hazardous area (CHA) in a manner consistent with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

## CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT

- National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development (Programme National de Déminage Humanitaire pour le Développement, PNDHD)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Army Engineer Corps

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

### OTHER ACTORS

- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

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## UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Having previously declared fulfilment of its Article 4 obligations in September 2014 at the Fourth CCM Meeting of States Parties, in 2019 Mauritania reported newly discovered cluster-munition-contaminated areas.<sup>1</sup> These areas are reported to be located in the "Tighert 2" region of Tires-Zemmour in the north of Mauritania, which borders Western Sahara. In Form F of its latest CCM Article 7 transparency report, the locations of the areas are listed as Boudheir, Boukhzame, Dhar el kelba, Elmetlani, Lekhneigue, Lemreir, and Tamreiket. Based on the testimonies of local people, the authorities have estimated that contamination covers a total area of 36km<sup>2</sup>. According to Mauritania, submunitions are visible on the ground and many camels have been killed, with the last discovery of submunitions occurring on 21 November 2019.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear how the size of the contaminated areas have been determined.

In Annex 1 of its Article 7 report, Mauritania also lists Oudyatte Bouzeyanne and Oudyatte Lekhyame as cluster-munition-contaminated locations (in addition to those mentioned in Form F), declaring that the size of the area for each site is unknown.<sup>3</sup> The map in Annex 1 of the Article 7 report appears to show a huge polygon within which are all of the suspected or confirmed hazardous areas. Therefore, CMR contamination, if confirmed, is likely to cover an area significantly less than 36km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to reporting discovery of new contamination in 2019, Mauritania had previously declared the completion of CMR clearance in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Contamination resulted from use of MK118, BLU-63, and M42 cluster munitions during the 1975–78 conflict over Western Sahara. Contamination was located in the northern border areas, around the village of Bir Moghreïn in the region of Tiris Zemmour.<sup>6</sup> In Mauritania's first CCM Article 7 report, submitted in 2013 and covering 2012, it was reported that CMR contamination totalled 10km<sup>2</sup>, covering eight areas north of the village of Bir Moghreïn in the north-east of the country.<sup>7</sup> Following survey by NPA in 2013, the estimated area was revised substantially downwards.<sup>8</sup>

Mauritania reported that it previously cleared a total of over 1.96km<sup>2</sup> of cluster-munition-contaminated area in 2014, with the destruction of 1,246 submunitions, across nine locations: Agwachin, Aldouik, Ayadiyatt, Bir Mariam, Eweineget, Gharet El hemeid, Oudeyatt bozeyan, Oum Edhbait, and Teghert.<sup>9</sup> However, based on its technical and non-technical survey, NPA revealed that after cancellation through non-technical survey of 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of area suspected to contain CMR in 2012, the total area confirmed to contain CMR, and which was subject to clearance in 2013, actually totalled 2.4km<sup>2</sup>. Clearance covered the same nine sites listed above.<sup>10</sup>

It is unclear whether all of the newly identified cluster-munition-contaminated areas are under Mauritania's effective control, and, if so, whether they are also under its jurisdiction. If the areas are under Mauritania's effective control but not under its jurisdiction, Mauritania will need to discuss this as a matter of urgency with others concerned, in particular Morocco and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.

Mauritania has also reported discovering anti-personnel mine contamination.<sup>11</sup> Please see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines 2020* report on Mauritania for more information.

## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The PNDHD, which was created in 2000, coordinates mine action operations in Mauritania.<sup>12</sup> Since 2007, the programme has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation, with oversight from an interministerial steering committee.<sup>13</sup> The PNDHD has its headquarters in the capital, Nouakchott, and a regional mine action centre (RMAC) in Nouadhibou.

Mauritania's national budget for demining and related activities in 2019 was MRU 3 million (approx. US\$75,000). It is seeking an additional US\$300,000 of international assistance to conduct non-technical survey, technical survey, marking, awareness-raising campaigns, and quality management.<sup>14</sup>

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

It is not known if the PNDHD has policies in place relating to gender and diversity in its mine action programme, and gender and diversity are not referenced in Mauritania's Article 7 report.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The national mine action database is held at the PNDHD. As at December 2017, Mauritania had strengthened its information management capacity by providing additional training to an information management specialist and migrating to Version 6 of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) software.<sup>15</sup>

In its Article 7 report covering 2019, Mauritania did not disaggregate cluster-munition-contaminated areas into CHAs and SHAs, in line with best practice and IMAS.

## PLANNING AND TASKING

According to its latest Article 7 report under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), submitted in 2020, part of the international cooperation and assistance sought by Mauritania is to support its efforts to draft a new mine action strategy, to replace the existing strategy which was expiring in 2020.<sup>16</sup>

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Survey and clearance operations are conducted in accordance with the Mauritanian National Mine Action Standards (NMAM), which are said to accord with IMAS. The NMAM include standards on non-technical survey, technical survey, mine clearance, and quality control (QC). The NMAM, were adopted in 2007. They were revised with the help of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and in partnership with operators, most notably NPA in 2010, and were translated into Arabic in 2011.<sup>17</sup> The NMAM are supposed to be reviewed once every three years.<sup>18</sup>

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In accordance with a 2006 decree, all clearance activities were conducted by the Army Engineer Corps operating under the PNDHD. In 2011, NPA signed a memorandum of understanding with Mauritania to provide support for both mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) in the country. NPA subsequently worked in Mauritania both as an operator and in a capacity-building role as a technical advisor for PNDHD until the end of 2015.<sup>19</sup>

The PNDHD has requested NPA's support in 2020 to conduct an assessment mission to determine the details of mined areas discovered since its declaration of APMBC Article 5 completion in November 2018. As part of the planned mission, NPA will also investigate the newly discovered cluster-munition-contaminated areas, as well as the mined area.<sup>20</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any cluster munition contaminated area in 2019.

### SURVEY IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any cluster-munition-contaminated area through survey in 2019.

### CLEARANCE IN 2019

Mauritania did not release any cluster-munition-contaminated area through clearance in 2019. Mauritania's CCM Article 7 report includes reference to submunition(s) being discovered in November 2019, but does not specify how many were discovered and whether they were destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

### ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 4 of the CCM, Mauritania is required to destroy all CMR in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 August 2022.

Mauritania had previously reported completing clearance of CMR in 2013, almost nine years before its treaty deadline. In its declaration of Article 4 compliance, Mauritania stated that as of 9 September 2013 it had made every effort to identify all areas under its jurisdiction or control contaminated by CMR, and that as of that date it had cleared and destroyed all CMR found, in accordance with Article 4(1) of the CCM.<sup>22</sup>

Mauritania plans to conduct an assessment mission, with the support of NPA, as soon as restrictions due to COVID-19 permit, in order to obtain additional information on the mined areas and inform its APMB Article 5 planning.<sup>23</sup> The assessment mission will presumably also cover investigation of CMR-contaminated areas, as envisaged by NPA.<sup>24</sup> The PNDHD requires international funding and cooperation to address contaminated areas in northern Mauritania.<sup>25</sup>

Mauritania is seeking international assistance to enable it to mark the confirmed and suspected "dangerous zones", clear contaminated areas, and destroy items of unexploded ordnance found. It is looking to train and capacity build PNDHD staff; renew office equipment (IT, furniture); renew marking and demining equipment; and carry out awareness campaigns, marking operations, demining and demolition, as part of a five-year plan.<sup>26</sup>

### PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

Mauritania has reported under the APMB that it "will remain committed to dealing with any residual contamination" for mines,<sup>27</sup> but no details have been provided on its plans to establish a long-term sustainable national capacity to address either previously unknown mined areas or CMR-contaminated areas, following completion.

Previously, PNDHD had reported that one of the main aims of Mauritania's work plan for 2017-20 was to establish a strategy for residual contamination.<sup>28</sup>

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- 1 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Annex I.
  - 4 Ibid.
  - 5 Declaration of Compliance with Art. 4(1)(a) of the CCM, submitted by Mauritania, 3 September 2014.
  - 6 Ibid.
  - 7 Article 7 Report (covering 2012), Form F.
  - 8 Article 7 Report (covering 2013), Form F; and Declaration of Compliance with Art. 4(1)(a) of the CCM, 3 September 2014.
  - 9 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
  - 10 Email from Melissa Andersson, Country Director, NPA, 13 May 2015.
  - 11 Third Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020.
  - 12 Decree No. 1960/MDAT/MDN establishing the PNDHD, 14 August 2007; and Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
  - 13 Decree No. 001358/MDAT establishing the Steering Committee of the PNDHD, 3 September 2007; and Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 2.
  - 14 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form I.
  - 15 APMBC Article 7 Report (covering 2017), Form D.
  - 16 APMBC Article 7 Report (covering 2019), pp. 13–14.
  - 17 Email from Alioune O. Mohamed El Hacen, PNDHD, 17 April 2011; and Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 5 and 8.
  - 18 Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 5 and 8.
  - 19 Emails from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 1 September 2016; and Melissa Andersson, NPA, 12 September 2016 and 13 March 2017.
  - 20 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 20 May 2020.
  - 21 Ibid.
  - 22 Declaration of Compliance with Art. 4(1)(a) of the CCM, submitted by Mauritania, 3 September 2014.
  - 23 Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, pp. 1 and 10; and APMBC Article 7 Report (covering 2019), p. 9.
  - 24 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 4 August 2020.
  - 25 Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 10; and CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form I.
  - 26 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
  - 27 Third APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, received June 2020, p. 3.
  - 28 Email from Aliouneould Menane, PNDHD, 23 July 2018.