

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Uzbekistan should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a State Party to the APMBC, Uzbekistan has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Uzbekistan should be more transparent in detailing the extent of its mine contamination and clearance operations.

ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE CONTAMINATION

Uzbek forces have laid mines along its international borders at various times, including on its borders with Afghanistan in 1998, with Kyrgyzstan in 1999, and with Tajikistan in 2000. While Tajikistan and Uzbekistan settled most of their 1,283km-long border dispute following the collapse of the Soviet Union, certain areas have not yet been delineated and therefore the exact location of mined areas is not known.¹ In 2010, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Ban Ki-moon, criticised as “unacceptable” Uzbekistan’s emplacing of mines along parts of its border that have not been delineated.²

Soviet troops also laid mines on the Uzbek-Afghan border. Uzbekistan had reportedly cleared 95% of the minefields along the Tajik border by the end of 2007 in demining operations conducted by Uzbek army deminers in cooperation with Tajik border troops.³

The first ever state visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Tajikistan took place in March 2018, and several agreements were signed between the two countries, including one on demarcation of the separate regions of the Tajik-Uzbek border. According to online media, during the visit the heads of the two states agreed that the common border would be cleared of landmines by the end of 2019.⁴ Online media sources reported that by October 2018 demining along the border had started.⁵ Mine clearance along the border, conducted by Uzbekistan, was reportedly completed by January 2020;⁶ the Uzbek and Tajik authorities then moved from delimiting their border to demarcation.⁷

In 2005, media reports cited Kyrgyz officials in Batken province as saying Kyrgyz border guards had checked previously mined areas of the border around the settlements of Ak-Turpak, Chonkara, and Otukchu, which had been cleared by Uzbek deminers, and confirmed that they were free of contamination.⁸ According to the most recent information available (2005), Uzbekistan has no plans to clear mines laid on its 150km border with Afghanistan.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no functioning mine action programme in Uzbekistan.

LAND RELEASE

There are no detailed reports of survey or clearance output in 2019, but according to online media sources in January 2020, mine clearance on the Uzbek side of the border with Tajikistan has been completed.⁹ Mine clearance was reportedly carried out exclusively by Uzbekistan and assistance from Tajikistan was refused, as the clearance conducted was exclusively on Uzbek territory.¹⁰

1 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, Director, TNMAC, 25 April 2018.

2 “Ban calls Uzbekistan land mines ‘unacceptable’”, *The Hindu*, 6 April 2010, at: bit.ly/2Z3WYgN.

3 Email from Jonmahmad Rajabov, Director, Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC), 16 February 2009; Tajikistan Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Article 7 Report, “General situation”, 3 February 2008, p. 3; and “Uzbekistan started demining on Tajik border”, *Spy.kz*, 23 October 2007.

4 “Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border”, *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020.

5 “Putting an end to 20 years of death along the Tajik-Uzbek Border”, *RFERL*, 13 October 2018; and “Report: Tajik-Uzbek Border Cleared of Mines”, *RFERL*, 6 January 2020.

6 “Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border”, *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; “Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to finalise border demarcation”, *Azernews*, 7 January 2020; and “Uzbekistan completes demining of border with Tajikistan, say officials”, *Central Asia News*, 4 February 2020.

7 “Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border”, *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; and “Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to finalise border demarcation”, *Azernews*, 7 January 2020.

8 IRIN, “Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Landmine threat along Uzbek border removed”, at: www.irinnews.org.

9 “Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border”, *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020.

10 *Ibid.*