

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Uzbekistan should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Uzbekistan should clear mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Uzbekistan should be more transparent in detailing the extent of its mine contamination and clearance operations.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Uzbek forces have laid mines along Uzbekistan's international borders at various times, including on its border 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 clearance, however, has not been verified by independent organizations, and as at 2018, civilian casualties were still being reported on the Uzbek-Tajik border.⁴

The first State visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Tajikistan in March 2018 saw several agreements 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 leaders of the two States agreed that their common border would be cleared of landmines by the end of 2019.⁵ Online media sources reported

that by October 2018 demining along the border had started,⁶ and that the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC) and the Tajik Ministry of Defence (MoD), "got acquainted" with mine maps before starting clearance. The size of the mined areas was not publicly shared, but unofficial reports indicated it was 9.5km².⁷ Mine clearance along the border, conducted by Uzbekistan, was reportedly completed by January 2020,⁸ following which the Uzbek and Tajik authorities progressed from delimiting their border to demarcating it.⁹ As at May 2021, demarcation discussions were still ongoing.¹⁰

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.¹¹ In March 2021, the prime ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan reached an agreement to end all territorial disputes between the two countries. The agreement entails land swaps and facilitation of movement between the two countries. According to online media reports, the Kyrgyz head of security services, Kamchybek Tashiyev, announced that "issues around the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border have been resolved 100 percent" and that "there is not a single patch of disputed territory left".¹² Uzbekistan has not reported plans to clear mines laid on its 150km border with Afghanistan.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no functioning mine action programme in Uzbekistan.

In March 2021, Russia and Uzbekistan were considering bilateral cooperation in mine action clearance and training of Uzbek military personnel at the Russian Mine Action Centre.¹³

LAND RELEASE

There are no detailed reports of survey or clearance output in 2020, but according to online media sources in January 2020, mine clearance on the Uzbek side of the border with Tajikistan was completed.¹⁴ Mine clearance was said to have been carried out exclusively by Uzbekistan and assistance from Tajikistan was refused, as the clearance conducted was exclusively on Uzbek territory.¹⁵

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- 1 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, Director, Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC), 25 April 2018.
 - 2 "Ban calls Uzbekistan land mines 'unacceptable'", *The Hindu*, 6 April 2010, at: <http://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 "Demining the Tajik-Uzbek Border: What have we learned from the Tajik experience?", *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction*, November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/3q7lixw>.
 - 5 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020.
 - 6 "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.
 - 7 "Demining of Tajik-Uzbek border began", *Regnum*, 9 October 2018, (Russian), at: <https://bit.ly/3vx2WXP>; "Tajikistan and Uzbekistan start demining their common border", *Sputnik Tajikistan*, 9 October 2018, (Russian), at: <https://bit.ly/3gAJm8l>; and "Dushanbe and Tashkent begin demining Tajik-Uzbek border", *Radio Ozodi*, 8 October 2018, (Russian), at: <https://bit.ly/3xAPzHv>.
 - 8 "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.
 - 9 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; and "Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to finalise border demarcation", *Azernews*, 7 January 2020.
 - 10 "Uzbekistan and Tajikistan discuss demarcation of state border", *KUN.UZ News*, 22 May 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3iSbky7>.
 - 11 "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Landmine threat along Uzbek border removed", *IRIN*, at: www.irinnews.org.
 - 12 "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan sign deal to end border disputes", *Euroasianet*, 26 March 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3vD5QKA>.
 - 13 "Uzbekistan, Russia looking at joint training of bomb disposal specialists", *Tass* (Russian News Agency), 30 March 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3gDKjfn>.
 - 14 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020.
 - 15 Ibid.