

## Statement on progress with AP landmine clearance in South Sudan.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you all for organizing this important meeting.

South Sudan continues to suffer from the legacy of its prolonged war of independence as well as that of the more recent fighting that has occurred within the country. To date this year 44 South Sudanese have fallen victim to landmines, cluster munitions or other unexploded remnants of war, and in 2018 the total number of victims passed the five thousand mark at 5,021. Sadly almost three-quarters of the victims in 2018 have been children.

Today however, I am pleased to be able to deliver a positive message from the Republic of South Sudan. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September this year, our President Salva Kiir Mayardit and opposition leaders signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Conflict in South Sudan which formally brings to an end five years of fighting, and which should lead to increased access to all areas by mine clearance teams as well as increased capacity of the Government of South Sudan to support those teams.

I should note that throughout this recent fighting there was no new use of anti-personnel landmines, and that all such allegations have been proved to be false.

A National Strategy for Mine Action for the period 2018 through to 2021 has been agreed, published and launched that highlights our commitment in three key areas:

1. Advocacy and communication of South Sudan's mine/ERW problem continues through adoption and implementation of international instruments to facilitate a mine and ERW free South Sudan.
2. The size of the mine/ERW contamination ~~area~~ is clarified and confirmed and the problem is addressed effectively and efficiently addressed using appropriate land release methods, supporting safe and sustainable livelihoods.
3. Safe behaviour is promoted among women, girls, boys and men to reduce mine/ERW accidents and promote safe livelihoods activities.

In line with this new strategy, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, we have worked to focus the efforts of the survey and clearance teams to apply the principles of land release to develop a much clearer understanding of the true extent of the remaining contamination in our country. Where as in previous years the majority of effort had been directed towards the clearance of the "known-knowns" i.e. the clearance of confirmed hazardous areas, in the last year there has been a renewed focus on the "known-unknowns", i.e.

clarifying our understanding of the true extent of those suspect hazardous areas that had not been visited for some years.

These efforts, carried out by both national and international NGOs as well as commercial entities have significantly revised our understanding of the extent of the contamination. Today I am pleased to report that the official estimate of remaining contamination in South Sudan is now as follows:

- 212 Minefields contaminating 33.07 km<sup>2</sup>;
- 121 Cluster Strikes contaminating 4.97 km<sup>2</sup>;
- 33 other battlefields contaminating 1km<sup>2</sup>.

Thus the current estimate of total contamination in South Sudan is now down to 39 square kilometres.

This is a significant reduction on our projection of just twelve months ago when the overall estimate was more than 93 square kilometres.

Furthermore, given safe access to those areas that were previously inaccessible due to fighting, we predict further significant reductions in the estimate of contamination, and now believe that with international support South Sudan might reasonably expect to declare itself Article Five compliant within three to five years. Indeed as I stand here today I am pleased to report that already 414 of 525 payams (the third administrative level within the country) in South Sudan are now free of land mines and cluster munitions.

Ladies and gentlemen, our combined efforts in 2018 have given us a new level of clarity over the extent of our contamination and we have established peace within our country. We are forming coherent plans to clear the remaining known hazards, but delivering a successful resolution to this problem will not be possible without the assistance of the international community. Hence I respectfully ask for your continued support for our efforts.

Without further ado I would like to thank you very much for your attention and consideration of our needs.

Jurkuch Barach Jurkuch

Chairman of National Mine Action Authority