

# **Mine Action Programme of Sudan: Status and Challenges in Implementation**

**Thursday, 8 June 2017**

## **Introduction and participants**

On 8 June 2017, Sudan and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as invited state and civil society representatives, met to engage on Sudan's needs and challenges in mine action. Following a presentation by Sudan, participants engaged in an informal discussion about possible avenues of cooperation and assistance in support of Sudan's efforts. The discussion portion of the meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule, meaning that comments were not for attribution.

State participants: Australia, Austria, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, (statement provided by Italy).

Additional Participants: Victim Assistance and Article 5 Committees of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, European Union, Geneva Call, Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), Handicap International, ICBL-CMC, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the Halo Trust, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

## **Presentation**

Sudan has released 103 square kilometres land since the beginning of its program. It has 27.5 square kilometres of contaminated land remaining, 19 square kilometres of which contains anti-personnel mines. The others are anti-tank mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Sudan estimates that it could meet its 2019 clearance obligation, if it is able to mobilize US\$ 71.4million in 2017 (US\$ 27.4 million) and 2018 (US\$44 million). Since 2002, Sudan has had 2,063 mine victims, 1473having been injured and 590 having been killed.

Key challenges identified by Sudan include:

- Funding: presently, Sudan has limited financial support from the international community. In addition, short funding cycles have been destabilising and challenged its ability to plan for long term clearance efforts.
- Security: ongoing conflict is likely making certain contaminated regions of the country i.e. (South Kordofan and Blue Nile states) more difficult to access. Currently there are a number of efforts being put forth by the State in order to achieve peace and security, including in reaching a political settlement. Sudan reported that it has come a long way politically, recently holding a conference between different parties. The National Dialogue Conference is a major and prominent mechanism for the realization of stability and to address political, security and economic challenges. These efforts have resulted in the formation of the national Reconciliation Government. Sudan aims to achieve sustainable peace, freedom and rights, and to play an important role in the region, opening the door to regional and international cooperation.

- Weather and road conditions: are significant issues in parts of Sudan and they can negatively impact the ability to conduct mine action operations, particularly during the rainy season.
- Lack of vehicles and equipment: Current vehicles and equipment were received from the UN in July 2011, and detectors (Minelab F3), vehicles and clearance machines are now outdated and need to be replaced.
- Difficulties in gathering accurate information, and in information management. The GICHD is providing support to Sudan on information management. They see this as a key area deserving more attention as it promotes transparency, essential to having an effective and efficient program.
- Deeply buried mines: Given that some mines are buried more than half a metre deep, they are more difficult to detect and require different methods of clearance.
- Environmental concerns: Avoid cutting trees and damaging the environment during demining operations.
- Victim assistance: Need for assistance to support the rehabilitation centres, in providing psychological and socio-economic support for 720 survivors who have yet to receive services, as well as training for victim assistance.

Currently, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is the main mine action actor representing the UN in Sudan, and Italy and Japan are Sudan's major mine action donors. The US has also recently made a contribution in Sudan on mine risk education and victim assistance. Sudan also funds its own program at a rate of approximately USD 2 million per year. For the past two years, Sudan has hosted a mine action stakeholders meeting in-country, a practice which it intends to repeat this year.

Sudan's presentation to the meeting and Sudan's work plan, which provides additional details, are included as Annex I and II, respectively.

## **Discussion**

Several participants inquired about how realistic it was that Sudan would meet its 2019 deadline, given the sizable gap between the funding that it has at present and what it would require. It was emphasised by some participants, while it was good for Sudan to orient its plans towards its current clearance objective, the essential inevitability of submitting an additional extension request will require it to translate its current mine action plan into a longer time frame.

Some representatives of states participating in the discussions noted that as a mine action donor they provide support through NGOs which are not currently working in Sudan (for example, Danish Demining Group, HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group, and Norwegian People's Aid). As such, some participants inquired about the organizations that are currently carrying out mine action activities and what other organization would Sudan welcome to carry out mine action activities. In relation to this, participants inquired to which areas these organizations would be granted access. This was viewed as particularly important given the absence of a peace agreement covering two of the most affected regions, South

Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Sudan welcomes the support of NGOs in addressing areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, in areas under the control of the Government of Sudan, and will facilitate participation by these organizations. The international NGOs however are required to abide by the rules and regulations of the country. At present, there are large areas under the control of Sudan in the two areas where operations can take place.

They also asked about the status of Darfur. Some participants reported that amongst other things visa delays and lack of access had been a problem in Sudan which had contributed to a number of mine action organizations withdrawing from the country in 2012 due to an inability to conduct their work.

Sudan shared that while denial of access is not their policy, it has sometimes been necessary due to security concerns, in particular in South Kordofan, Darfur, and Blue Nile. Sudan also noted that it believes that the contamination in Darfur is ERW rather than mines, so it is not relevant to its Ottawa Convention obligations. Sudan indicated that it will work to fully open access for international NGOs to operate in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, although that is unlikely to happen until a comprehensive peace agreement has been achieved but it will do its best to facilitate it.

A representative of the Convention's Committee on Victim Assistance intervened to recognize Sudan's comprehensive report on victim assistance submitted to the Committee, which highlights positive developments for victim assistance, including a victim assistance strategy to 2019 (Annex III). The representative asked for a copy of the strategy and more information on Sudan's economic integration programs. The representative also noted that persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors, should make up 2-5% of the staff of every governmental administration and ministry.

Participants also raised the issue of donor visibility. Some donor states want to be able to demonstrate and share results with their populations. In this sense, the issue of accessibility was seen as critical. In response, the delegation of Sudan explains that, over the past two years Sudan has clearly highlighted the support provided by donors including Japan and Italy. Sudan will continue to provide full visibility to any future donor visibility.

Sudan was also asked whether the estimated amount of contamination could potentially be reduced through non-technical survey, to which Sudan replied that it could possibly lead to some reduction particularly in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states due to complex nature of the ground.

UNMAS observed that since it returned in 2015, it has found that the major challenge was a lack of stakeholder coordination but that this is now beginning to improve. Its perspective is that every donated dollar is used effectively. In its view, the ground in Sudan is paved for action and it is important to be prepared for action in the two regions (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) when the peace process permits.

### **Follow up**

Sudan will hold a stakeholder coordination meeting in country, it will be held on 27 September 2017. Representatives of all states that were invited to this Individualized Approach meeting will be invited through their local representation. NGOs will also be welcome to participate.

Several participants were pleased that there was political will to allow access and requested updates on their policy, as it could factor into future mine action funding decisions. There were indications that

some further discussions or assessment missions to Sudan may go forward in light of these changing circumstances.

Questions about the Mine Action Program in Sudan should be directed to:

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