

In The Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE SUDAN NATIONAL MINE ACTION CENTER

AT

THE SEVENTEEN MEETING OF OTTAWA CONVENTION STATES PARTIES

NOVEMBER 2018

(The inspections and preventive measures adopted to prevent acts prohibited under Ottawa Convention)

Mr. President

In the light of what has been requested, we reaffirm the foregoing on the subject matter and we furtherance inform on the following;

1. Sudan is firmly committed to all procedures and provisions of the Ottawa Convention, while the Government of Sudan remains keen to support programmes and activities that have been developed in accordance with the agreement because it does not object to its peace-seeking programmes aiming to achieve peace and stability throughout the country through the mechanism of the comprehensive national dialogue which is widely accepted by a wide range of the opposition political forces.
2. In late 2012, while Sudan delegation was taking part in the Meeting of the states parties to the Ottawa Convention, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) accused Sudan of using of anti-personnel landmines yet with reference to six locations; Hegleg, Balila, Kalimo, Jebel Kowa, Heiban, and Troji.
3. In response to the ICBL allegations, our state has immediately called for the establishment of an investigation board consisting mainly of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations under the auspices of the National Mine Action Center (NMAC), with a view to investigate and verify the validity of the allegations on the ground.
4. The board of inquiry applied the methodology of inquiry, direct questioning, listening to witness's testaments and anecdotal evidence from the local inhabitants as well as field interviews involving field military commanders, corporate personnel and humanitarian organizations operating in the alleged areas.
5. Finally, the board of inquiry drew to the conclusion that the anti-personnel landmines had never been used in the areas controlled by the Government of Sudan, notably Hegleg, Balila and Kalimo where those areas have been thoroughly investigated. This conclusion was reached as a result of the following actions:

- a. The investigation commission noted the strict adherence to Ottawa Convention by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in the designated areas, with full compliance with the standing instructions issued by the supreme commanders.
 - b. It was found that the flow of roaming traffic in each of the subject areas was unrestricted, yet no single mine-related incident was reported.
 - c. The investigation commission also noted that the oil exploration processes by the Greater Nile Oil Company in the so-called areas has not stopped.
 - d. Replies received from various government agencies and medical facilities do not refer to any reported mine incidents in areas inspected by the Board of Inquiry.
 - e. The safe movement of the members of the investigation board, reconnoitering the alleged areas and their ability to meet and interrogate the community members of those areas.
6. Mainly because of security problems, the Board of Inquiry was unable to reach Mount Jebel Kowa, Heiban and Troji at the time the investigation was launched.
 7. Those inaccessible areas which fell out of the government control will be considered for the future investigation by the Commission of Inquiry once security conditions improve and accessibility is permitted.
 8. Finally, we would like to point out that, despite the economic distress the country has been undergoing, the country continues its politically, logistically and financially support to the humanitarian mine action program. In this particular case, it should be noted that the government financial support to the mine action has exceeded \$4 million over the past years notably (2016-2017).
 9. Our government has been affiliated with the option of peace through the repeated renewal of the unilateral ceasefire in one hand and permanently calls upon the arms holders to side peace and at the same time managing the issue of mine action in the other hand according to a fruitful coordination and cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Services. This coordination resulted in achieving evident advancement on the ground represented in the announcement of demining completion of the hazardous areas in three eastern states of Sudan in the presence of donors and partners.
 10. In conclusion, let me reaffirm our profound confidence and belief in the coordination mechanisms which were espoused by both the National Mine Action Center and United Nations Mine Action Services and by partners from the other hand. An issue that bears the fruits of achieving a reasonable level of common understanding. In fact, the response resulting from this approach has helped to enable the success mechanisms of the mine action program; this particularly came in the light of our unwavering commitment to Ottawa Convention which has pledged to attain our national aspirated goal of “Sudan free from mines”.

Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah,