

Individualised Approach of South Sudan

The way ahead together:

Achieving the shared goal of ridding South Sudan of anti-personnel mines by its 2026 deadline

Thursday, 24 November 2022

Introduction and participants

On 24 November 2022 South Sudan, with the support of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, invited State and civil society representatives to engage in an open and frank discussion regarding South Sudan's needs and challenges in implementation of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention by its 9 July 2026 deadline and in line with South Sudan's updated work plan.

In preparation for the event, participants received an invitation package, including an invitation and agenda, together with South Sudan's presentation and a backgrounder on the status of implementation (both attached). These documents will be made available on South Sudan's country page of the Convention website¹.

The Individualised Approach was held in a hybrid format on the margins of the 21-25 November 2022 Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties.

I. Participation

States: Austria, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe

Organisations: Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Mine Action Review (MAR), United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

II. Overview of South Sudan's remaining challenges and needs

Welcome remarks and an overview of the individualised approach was provided by **Ms. Nagai Nana**, First Secretary, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, and Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation.

Presentation by National Mine Action Authority

Following introductory remarks, **Honourable Jurkuch Barach**, Chairperson of the National Mine Action Authority of South Sudan (NMAA) provided a presentation on the situation in South Sudan concerning implementation of Article 5.

The presentation included opening remarks by Lt. Gen. Chol Thon, Deputy Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs of South Sudan, an introductory video from the following representatives in Juba; H.E. Jan Huesken, Chargé d'Affaires, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Netherlands to South Sudan, Mr. Fran O'Grady, Chief of Mine Action, UNMISS, Ms. Lisa Anouk Muller-Dormann, Peacebuilding Programme Manager, DRC, and Mr. Eric Okoth, Country Director, MAG.

¹ <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/en/membership/south-sudan/>

Mr. Jurkuch provided an overview of South Sudan's recently submitted updated work plan which included information on the current status of implementation of South Sudan's Article 5 obligations, including a summary of the remaining challenge consisting of 113 mined areas measuring 5,419,699 square metres, including 66 confirmed hazardous areas measuring 3,056,640 square metres and 47 suspected hazardous areas measuring 2,363,059 square metres.

Mr. Jurkuch summarised the key challenges faced by South Sudan in implementation of its Article 5 commitments including return to violence, high numbers of displaced people, flooding, inter-communal and political violence. South Sudan thanked the international community for the support of the international community to challenges faced by South Sudan.

Mr. Jurkuch remarked that South Sudan has the national and international institutions in place to respond to the Article 5 challenge. However, he noted several challenges concerning reduced resources for implementation and acknowledged the importance of support to partners to deploy additional mechanical assets and survey and clearance teams. He also provided information on the available capacity which includes 3 commercial companies (19 demining teams), 3 international non-governmental organization (11 demining team), 1 national non-governmental organization (1 demining team) and 7 organization carrying out Explosive Ordnance Risk Education. Mr. Jurkuch highlighted that South Sudan has in place a work plan for completion that includes realistic annual milestones should sufficient resources be provided.

In closing, Mr. Jurkuch mentioned two follow-up activities that are planned to take place following the Individualised Approach event; i) the NMAA in cooperation with UNMAS/UNMISS will host a national level Mine Action Workshop with relevant stakeholders aimed at defining actions needed to redefine the contamination problem and to mobilize resources for mine action activities ii) the NMAA will coordinate with UNMAS/UNMISS and organise donor round table conferences to identify supporters that would provide funding to South Sudan's mine action programme.

III. Summary of interventions and discussions

UNMAS South Sudan provided further context to the challenges faced by South Sudan in implementation of its Article 5 obligations including on-going humanitarian crisis with South Sudan having the 4th largest displaced population in the world, a reduced dry season and a 9-month rainy season that has resulted in extensive flooding limiting access to mined areas. Despite these challenges, noted the Government's commitment to mine action, including plans to introduce a law on mine action and further plans to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions. UNMAS further noted that 10 years after independence, South Sudan is close to the finish line. UNMAS further highlighted that funding is declining and called upon those present to use their voices in support of South Sudan.

GICHD provided remarks in support of the Individualised Approach highlighting their support to South Sudan's strategic planning process and information management system. The GICHD also mentioned it was finalising a case study on, 'The Sustainable Development Outcomes of the Mine Action in South Sudan', as part of the 'Beyond Square Meters' project jointly implemented with UNDP. The case study will analyse the contribution of land release, victim assistance, and explosive ordnance risk education to the SDGs over the medium- and long-term. The GICHD also mentioned that the case study would highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming and the establishment of partnerships. The GICHD further expressed their hope that the findings will serve as an effective reference to highlight and promote the value of mine action as an enabler of broader humanitarian, peace and development efforts.

MAG requested further information on South Sudan's proposed donor and technical workshops to take place in-country as described in South Sudan's presentation. South Sudan responded by

mentioning that both workshops will be conducted in cooperation with UNMAS and stakeholders in the country with dates yet to be confirmed.

MAG note the impact of fighting, insecurity, and the importance of conducting survey to update old Landmine Impact Survey data and the potential role of cross-border activities to support this work , in particular given the situation with refugees in neighbouring countries.

MAR highlighted the importance of South Sudan making available its resource mobilisation strategy and the importance of analysing the impact of climate change on mined areas, including the potential for flooding of mined areas and the shifting of mines due to flooding. MAR also noted the tangible role of mine action to enable development and highlighted the importance of cleared land for productive agricultural use.

UNMAS noted that internal conflicts together with increased flooding had greatly reduced access to affected areas, particularly in the region of Equatoria. UNMAS also noted the challenge of clearing areas contaminated with cluster munitions and then identifying an area of landmines. UNMAS mentioned a lack of access to key informants due to displacement caused by internal conflicts and the competing priorities of the Government in responding to a range of humanitarian issues.

UNMAS highlighted the coordination meeting conducted by the NMAA with all stakeholders to collect ideas that directly informed the drafting of the detailed updated workplan, including responding to newly identified contamination. UNMAS mentioned that in a recent meeting with the Government of South Sudan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had expressed its continued commitment to the treaty and indicated that it is in the process of tabling the first law on Mine Action. UNMAS also mentioned that South Sudan has the mechanisms in place, mine action standards and a clear prioritisation matrix that should give confidence to stakeholders. In this regard, UNMAS called for international support, noting that South Sudan is almost across the finish line. UNMAS reiterated that South Sudan has a programme with a shared goal, has a strategy in place, has a resource mobilisation strategy that is adapted to the context and can be adapted based on changes in context. UNMAS further mentioned the impact of climate change, in particular the change in the course of the Nile which has had a profound effect, causing 10,000 people to be recently relocated near a mined area. UNMAS further noted that 2022 had been worst year in terms of food security in South Sudan. UNMAS mentioned that when an area is cleared people move in straight away. UNMAS also reiterated that the international and national non-governmental organizations are in place to provide clear partnerships for international cooperation.

ICBL mentioned that South Sudan's work plan was clear and that South Sudan had in place the systems in place for the final push for completion and highlighted the importance of the support of international partners for South Sudan to complete by 2026.

The Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (ISU) noted that South Sudan has been a responsible party since its succession to the Convention, having annually submitted detailed annual Article 7 transparency reports and consistently participating in the work of the Convention and encouraged all partners to support South Sudan in fulfilling its commitments under the Convention including support to South Sudan in meeting its Article 5 commitments ahead of its 2026 deadline.

IV. Closing remarks

In closing, Ms. Nagai Nana expressed her thanks to those participants involved in the discussion and encouraged all those present to focus on the discussion and reflect on efforts to support South Sudan. In offering closing remarks **Mr. Jurkuch** expressed his thanks to the Chair for her facilitation of the event, the ISU for its support and all the participants for their attendance.

Mr. Jurkuch also thanked those present for the opportunity to share in detail the problems faced by South Sudan and encouraged those donor countries and organizations present to support the people of South Sudan to rid the country of anti-personnel landmines.

For further information or clarification on the Mine Action Programme in the South Sudan please direct all queries to:

Hon. Jurkuch Barach, Chairperson of the National Mine Action Authority of South Sudan at jbarach70@gmail.com, and/or **Mr. Fran O'Grady**, Chief of Mine Action, UNMISS francis.ogrady@un.org.

Attachments

1. Agenda
2. Presentation South Sudan
3. Updated Work Plan South Sudan