

Statement for the Chairperson of the South Sudan National Mine Action Authority
5th Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this pivotal moment as we gather for the 5th Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), also known as the Ottawa Treaty. This gathering reminds us of the power of unity, diplomacy, and commitment to humanity's safety and progress. The Ottawa Treaty remains one of the most successful disarmament treaties in history, and - despite many set-backs - it continues to serve as a potent reminder that the vision of a mine-free future is possible to achieve. Today, nearly every nation on earth has joined in rejecting these inhumane weapons, which demonstrates the Treaty's powerful normative impact—an impact I hope will one day be matched by the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to which South Sudan acceded in August 2023, becoming its 112th member state.

For South Sudan, this journey began at the very moment of our nation's independence in 2011, when we acceded to the APMBC through succession. Our young country, still grappling with the aftereffects of decades of conflict, inherited significant challenges. Contaminated, or suspected to be contaminated by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, hundreds of 387 square kilometres of our land remained perilous. These hidden dangers posed risks not only to the lives and limbs of our citizens but to our developmental aspirations, obstructing access to essential services, halting infrastructure development, and limiting economic progress.

Despite these formidable challenges, South Sudan has made substantial strides toward our goal of a mine-free country. Thanks to the invaluable support of international donors, the United Nations, and dedicated NGOs, we have reduced contaminated land from almost 400 square kilometres in 2011 to just 22 square kilometres today, with 5 square kilometres still impacted by landmines. These numbers represent an immense achievement, a testament to the effectiveness of the APMBC and the commitment of our partners and brave deminers. Through risk education programs, we have empowered our communities, helping them navigate the remaining dangers, while clearance teams have lifted the burdens of contamination from large swathes of our territory.

However, Mr. President, as we celebrate these accomplishments, we must also confront the reality before us. When the Ottawa Treaty was drafted in the late 1990s, the year 2025 was envisioned as the aspirational deadline for a mine-free world. While we have come a long way, we, the global community, have fallen short of this aspiration, and South Sudan is no exception. Due to a combination of complex factors, we now know that meeting our Article 5 deadline by 2026 will not be possible. Ongoing conflicts, a challenging security environment, seasonal flooding, inadequate infrastructure, and a steady decline in international funding are some of the significant obstacles we face. Yet, while these factors slow our progress, they do not diminish our resolve.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The commitment of the Republic of South Sudan to the ideals of the APMBC remains unwavering. Despite the obstacles, we are determined to achieve a South Sudan free from the scourge of landmines. Our recent accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions signals a reinforcement of our commitment to the broader disarmament and humanitarian goals embodied by these treaties.

Each mine, mortar, and cluster munition removed from our land is a life saved, a future rebuilt, and a step toward peace and development for all our people.

As we stand here today, I urge the international community to renew its support for mine action in South Sudan and other affected states. This shared commitment remains critical to our progress. The expertise and resources provided by international donors, the United Nations, and NGOs have enabled us to achieve what we have today. Yet, to realise our ultimate goal, we must overcome the current funding decline and address the operational challenges that lie before us.

Let us not falter at this crucial juncture. The remarkable achievements of the Ottawa Treaty have shown what can be accomplished through collective action. Together, we can make the aspirations of 2025, though delayed, a reality. Together, we can ensure that the promise of a mine-free world endures for the generations to come.

Thank you.