

REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR COMPLETING THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Submitted by South Sudan

Introduction

1. On 9 January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan (GoS)¹. The CPA established a timeline to the January 2011 referendum that led to the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 when South Sudan became the 193rd member state of the United Nations.
2. Prior to the CPA, in 1997, the Government of Sudan signed the Convention on 4 December 1997 and ratified it on 13 October 2003. South Sudan deposited its notification of accession to the Convention on Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on 11 November 2011, and the Convention became effective for South Sudan on 9 July 2011, the date of State succession.
3. In accordance with the provisions of Article 5 of the Convention, South Sudan was granted a 10-year period to meet its mine clearance obligations, until 9 July 2021. However, several circumstances impeded South Sudan's progress in implementation of its obligations, including; a return to violence, and general insecurity that has affected the country for the majority of the time since independence, and had a severe impact on the clearance effort and added yet more contamination to be cleared.
4. As a result, a request for a five-year extension of the deadline was submitted on 31 March 2020, at the Eighteenth Meeting of the State Parties and subsequently approved, setting a new date to 9 July 2026. Despite significant efforts, it is clear that the country will not meet its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention by this deadline.
5. This document outlines how full adherence to South Sudan's obligations under Article 5 will be achieved. It details the resources required, and the methodology that will be used to address each of the hazardous areas, (for all contamination types) that remain. It also recognises the uncertainties that still exist and includes a provision to address those tasks that have not yet been identified but might still exist. The Government of South Sudan is committed to delivering on its obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and believes that it is possible that it may do so by 9th July 2030.

Origin of the Article 5 Challenge

6. From the outset, the country faced tremendous humanitarian, development and security challenges. There were few tarred roads and long running tribal tensions were not healed by the liberation. Inter-communal violence had broken out in several areas of the country even by the time of independence. The legacy of conflict could be found all over the country, not only in the form of minefields, cluster strikes and mined roads, but with unexploded ordnance also ever-present. More than 4,000 people had been injured by landmines and other unexploded ordnance and many of the roads mined. Further adding to the logistical challenges there were only two bridges across the Nile and that is in the capital of Juba. This situation remains today.

¹ Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005. Peace Accords Matrix. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. Retrieved 16 July 2016

Remaining challenge at the beginning the previous request

7. South Sudan's 2020 extension request reported a total remaining Article 5 challenge consisting of 122 anti-personnel mined areas measuring 7,337,011 square metres, including 64 confirmed mined areas measuring 2,866,375 square metres and 58 suspected mined areas measuring 4,470,636 square metres.

Nature and extent of progress made since previous request

8. Since the approval of the Article 5 extension request in July 2021, 21 anti-personnel minefields measuring 3,783,602 square metres have been addressed, in the process destroying 595 anti-personnel mines. During this period, South Sudan also addressed 17 anti-tank minefields, 17 mined roads, 97 battlefields and 87 cluster munition strikes. 31.4 square kilometres of confirmed or suspected hazardous.
9. Since 2021, South Sudan has continued to identify previously unknown mined areas, including 7 tasks measuring 140,511 square metres in 2021, 7 tasks measuring 436,764 square metres in 2022, 5 tasks measuring 301,683 square metres in 2023, and 6 tasks measuring 84,892 square metres in 2024.
10. Previously unknown mined areas have been identified through accidents, returnees and as the peace dividend allowed access to previously inaccessible locations.
11. Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) has been a cornerstone of the mine action programme in South Sudan with direct delivery of risk education given to 3.69 million people across the country since the last extension request. All risk education teams are gender balanced and reach out to all demographics, access the entire community in order to understand their concerns and priorities.
12. Since joining the Convention, there have been 21 anti-personnel mines (AP) accidents with 25 victims of which 15 were injured and 10 killed and prior to November 2011 there were 1,168 AP mines accidents with 2,918 victims comprising 2,028 injured and 890 killed.

Circumstances impeding compliance within period of extension request

13. The war in South Sudan was fought over many years by armies with very diverse arsenals. This resulted in contamination that was not just limited to anti-personnel mines, but also cluster munitions, battlefields with unexploded ordnance and mined roads. Thus, a variety of hazards impacted roads, airstrips, key infrastructure as well as housing and agricultural land. As such, as is the case whenever these competing demands exist, it would have made no sense to solely prioritise the clearance of anti-personnel mines, and so the overall problem has been addressed in a holistic and efficient manner, rather than through clearance disaggregated by threat type to prioritise one hazard type over another.
14. Since 2011 there have been several outbreaks of extreme violence, most notably in 2013 and 2016. Sporadic fighting continues today. This severely impacts the delivery of mine action operations, not just by inhibiting access to certain areas, but also through generating a climate of insecurity that has been prohibitive to the conduct of mine clearance operations.
15. There have also been technical challenges in South Sudan, most notably the presence of minimal metal anti-tank mines, predominantly laid in low densities in roads.

16. Despite the optimism of an independent South Sudan, almost throughout the period of its independence there has been fighting somewhere in the country, sometimes politically driven but often based on land rights or other inter-communal disputes. The divisions within the country have resulted in many parts of it being inaccessible to mine action teams for extended periods.
17. Compounding the difficulties of security related access restrictions, the poor state of infrastructure and seasonal rains degrade many of the roads to a point that they are either impassable or so damaged that they cannot be relied upon for a casualty evacuation. In addition, the recent years have seen severe flooding. As a result of this, demining activity in South Sudan is severely curtailed in this period to the extent that the regular demining “season”, in which the majority of mine clearance takes place in South Sudan, is limited to the months of November or, in recent years, to December, through until June. This shortened demining year impedes productivity. These climatic patterns were carefully considered during the development of the workplan. Mechanical assets, which require dry conditions to operate effectively, are generally limited to deployment between December and June. In contrast, manual clearance teams can maintain productivity for up to ten months, accounting for variations in weather and accessibility factors.
18. The protracted civil turmoil, particularly in the period post 2013, has led to millions of South Sudanese being displaced and forced to shelter in temporary displacement camps. This displacement has led to the collapse of agricultural production and has brought much of the population to the edge of famine. This economic backdrop has understandably impacted upon the climate of support for mine action funding, as other areas of immediate support have been prioritised. Finally, the ever-present security threats have forced more than a million South Sudanese, including many trained demining personnel, to seek safety outside the country. To compound this further, there has been significant climatic shocks, where since 2020, South Sudan has experienced worsened flooding that had not been witnessed for more than 60 years.

Humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications

19. Minefields contaminate or deny access to land that would otherwise be used productively. At times, circumstances or lack of knowledge about the presence of mines leads community members to put themselves in danger by using or transiting through contaminated land. Minefields limit agriculture, grazing cattle, and the use of land for natural resources. In addition, minefields have been found around schools and clinics, and in a country where a significant amount of travel is done by foot, minefields make travel extremely dangerous.

The Remaining challenge

20. As of 31 December 2024, South Sudan has a remaining Article 5 challenge consisting of 114 mined areas measuring 4,943,561 square metres. In total, South Sudan is contaminated with 333 known hazardous areas with a total area of 22,339,563 square metres to be addressed.

Table 1: Remaining explosive ordnance (EO) contamination as at 31 December 2024

Hazard Type	Number of Hazards	Area of Hazards (m ²)
AP Minefields	114	4,943,561
AT Minefields	51	2,329,655
Mined Roads	26	3,919,768
Cluster Strikes	105	9,531,758
Battlefields	37	1,614,821
Total	333	22,339,563

Requested time for extension

21. South Sudan is requesting a **four-year extension, 9 July 2026 - 9 July 2030**, to allow it to **complete its clearance of all anti-personnel mined areas** in the country.

Rationale for the time requested

22. The Government of South Sudan is committed to the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan and intends to clear its minefields to the fullest extent possible by 2030. The rationale for the timeframe requested is based on the belief that South Sudan now has an accurate assessment of the extent of its contamination and a clear understanding of the clearance requirement to achieve completion. The detailed rationale for the requirements for both the number and type of teams as well as the number of years they are needed for is presented in the detailed narrative.

Work plan

23. The widespread insecurity that has affected South Sudan since 2013 has led to deployment of small mobile teams. These were ideally suited for survey work and the clearance of spot UXO tasks but are not well suited to the clearance of minefields. This has been addressed by the deployment of larger and more adequate teams that were formed in order to deliver a more efficient clearance capacity that is needed to meet the goals of this plan. In addition, the mechanical clearance capacity have also been increased.

24. This extension request is believed to be grounded in fact and based on proven clearance rates and realistic resource expectations. It is however also based on optimism and the hope that peace can prevail in the country. Without a doubt, the threat of renewed violence is the greatest threat to the plan, but that is followed by uncertainty over funding for mine action. The country remains heavily dependent upon aid and food insecurity is rife and since 2020, severe flooding has impacted over 40 percent of population, millions are displaced both inside and out of the country. There are therefore many competing conflicting demands and priorities on aid budgets.

25. Because of the logistical difficulties that are faced in South Sudan, it is necessary to approach the work plan for the remaining clearance requirement at the regional level. Thus the requirements in terms of clearance assets for each part of the country are addressed at a regional level. The table of all remaining clearance tasks can be found in Annex A. This table shows the approach to be adopted for every single area clearance task in the current South Sudan contamination database.

Financial resources (national and international)

26. South Sudan has a clear work plan to achieve its goals by 2030 but cannot envisage doing so without greater national funding and international support. The current work plan for the complete AP mines clearance of South Sudan is estimated to cost US \$183.55 million with a maximum annual budget of US \$41.76 million in 2026 and dropping to US \$ 16.05 million in 2030.
27. Since the majority of funding to support South Sudan's efforts to address mined areas is received through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)/United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), (about 75 percent), there is no certainty that the current funding levels or mandate to support Article 5 mine clearance will be sustained and the priorities of UNMISS may not always be directly aligned with those of this plan and thus the UNMISS funded mine action teams may be tasked for other work to support UNMISS mandate and the peace process.

Institutional capacities

28. In this case, there is an urgent need to build a sustainable national capacity in South Sudan. Beginning with a strongly supported National Mine Action Authority. A new Mine Action Law, passed in 2023 has provided an institutional basis for national coordination of mine action. However, the authority remains underfunded and under-resourced and efforts to advocate for greater national and international material and human resources are required.
29. South Sudan with the support of international partners has achieved considerable success, as demonstrated below:
- a) South Sudan is geographically 90.8 percent free of known AP mines
 - b) 47 Payams which is 9.2 percent of the country are contaminated with AP mines
30. Given that 90 percent of payams have no area clearance tasks for AP mines remaining, a strong case can be made for the transition to a 'reactive' phase in these payams, with the resourcing of a strong national capacity.

Assumptions / risks of the plan

31. South Sudan's plan for the clearance of contaminated areas as outlined in this extension request is based on six key assumptions: a) Freedom of access, no resumption of fighting, b) Sustained or increased funding, c) Few additional minefields are recorded, d) That most of the remaining largest recorded hazards are re-surveyed and, where applicable, cancelled, or drastically reduced, through non-technical and technical survey respectfully, e) There will be no global or regional shock(s) affecting mobility of personnel like COVID-19 in 2020, and, f) That the following clearance rates can be sustained; i) that manual demining rates will average 20 square metres / deminer / day and that 15 lane teams will deploy and clear 300 square metres / day; ii) that manual battle area clearance (BAC) teams will clear 1,000 square metres / day, (note that this is not applicable to the remaining AP contamination), and iii) that mechanical clearance teams will clear 2,000 square metres / day.
32. In line with the assumptions outlined above, the following risks have been identified, which could impact the successful completion of planned demining activities within this extension period, insecurity, economic, environmental, global climatic changes, annual funding available for clearance operations, and failure to reconfigure the clearance capacity.