



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

South Sudan's mine action programme:

Overview of remaining challenges and requirements for assistance

Thursday, 19 June 2025

Introduction

On 19 June 2025, South Sudan and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with support from the Implementation Support Unit, convened an Individualised Approach meeting in Geneva to discuss South Sudan's remaining mine action challenges and needs for assistance. This marks the second time South Sudan has engaged in the Individualised Approach, following its first meeting in 2022.

The Individualised Approach serves as a voluntary and informal platform for affected States Parties to engage with donors, mine action operators, and other stakeholders to outline in detail challenges and needs for assistance in meeting its Article 5 obligations.

Invited participants received a package that included an invitation, programme, background materials, a concept note and information on South Sudan's extension request submitted to the Twenty-Second Meeting of the States Parties. These and other documents will be made available on South Sudan's country page of the Convention website¹.

Participants

States: Denmark, Ethiopia, Japan, the Netherlands, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe

Organisations: European Union, ICBL, Mine Detection Centre Afghanistan, Norwegian People's Aid, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Mine Action Service

Online Participants: Danish Church Aid, United Nations Mine Action Service (South Sudan), Mines Advisory Group, United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (South Sudan), Mine Action Review, Save lives initiative South Sudan

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

Summary

The meeting was opened by Ms. Sofie Kallehauge, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Denmark in Geneva and then Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance. Opening remarks were provided by H.E. Alier Deng Ruai Deng, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations in Geneva. Ambassador Deng highlighted the serious threat posed by explosive ordnance contamination in the country, with children representing 80% of recorded casualties, and that contamination restricts access to humanitarian assistance, peace operations, and development, particularly for displaced populations. Despite these challenges, Ambassador Deng reiterated South Sudan's significant progress since 2004, with over 1,300 square kilometres of land released from contamination and more than 7 million people reached through risk education activities. With only 20 square kilometres remaining, Ambassador Deng reaffirmed that the goal of South Sudan completing its Article 5 obligations is within reach.

Ambassador Deng explained that, as progress towards South Sudan's Article 5 deadline has been impeded by insecurity, flooding, poor infrastructure, and declining donor support, South Sudan submitted an extension request for consideration by the Twenty-Second Meeting of the States Parties seeking a four-year extension until 9 July 2030. The Ambassador emphasised that the Individualised Approach serves to contextualise the work plan contained in South Sudan's request and strengthen cooperation by engaging donors and partners to explore long term partnerships that can enable South Sudan to meet its Convention obligations. He welcomed the shared commitment of those present in advancing the goals of the Convention and reaffirmed the Government of South Sudan's commitment to meeting its obligations under the Convention.

Presentation from South Sudan

The Chairperson of South Sudan's National Mine Action Authority (NMAA), Honourable Jurkuch Barach Jurkuch provided an overview of current anti-personnel mine contamination and operational challenges. As of 31 December 2024, South Sudan recorded a remaining challenge of 114 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), covering an area of 5 million square metres. In addition, South Sudan also highlighted contamination with cluster munitions, measuring 17 million square metres.

Chairperson Jurkuch shared that since July 2021, 1.5 million square metres of land has been released. However, progress has been hindered by insecurity, logistical constraints, flooding, and a significant reduction in funding. Approximately 75% of mine clearance operations are currently supported through the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and any reduction in financial support to the Mission would severely impact South Sudan's operational capacity to fulfil its Article 5 challenge. Chairperson Jurkuch further highlighted the need to fully deploy existing mechanical clearance assets, noting that with sufficient funding and mobilisation of current mechanical capacities, South Sudan could complete clearance of all known mined areas within two years. Chairperson Jurkuch noted that mechanical clearance was the most effective and cost-efficient approach to achieve South Sudan's goal.

In closing, Chairperson Jurkuch expressed his sincere gratitude to South Sudan's partners and donors for their commitment and encouraged all present to be part of South Sudan's success towards completion.

Discussion

Mr. Zehrudin Sukanovic, Chief Mine Action, UNMAS/UNMISS, (South Sudan, online) took the floor thanking those present for their continued support and ongoing interest in South Sudan's progress in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention. UNMAS noted that since 2000, over 1 million items of explosive ordnance have been destroyed and millions of square kilometres of land have been released. UNMAS confirmed that an estimated 5 million square metres of anti-personnel mine contamination remains.

UNMAS shared that a recent drop in UNMAS operational capacity from 75% to under 50% resulted from a UN-wide funding reduction. This has resulted in the demobilisation of three mechanical assets and reduced field deployments that have directly impacted timelines and progress.

UNMAS encouraged donors to support the activation of existing mechanical assets that are critical to meeting South Sudan's clearance obligations. UNMAS shared a short video highlighting the work of South Sudan in addressing its Article 5 mine clearance challenge.

The Netherlands (online) announced that just three (3) weeks ago, the Netherlands launched a new five-year mine action programme focusing on 8 priority countries, of which South Sudan is one. The Netherlands proudly shared that under its new five-year mine action programme, the Netherlands pledged EUR 14 million over the 5-year period running until South Sudan's Article 5 deadline (June 2030). The Netherlands highlighted that this includes EUR 12.3 million in support for South Sudan through the Danish Refugee Council and Danish Church Aid for clearance and risk education activities. As well as EUR 1.7 million to Norwegian People's Aid to strengthen national coordination capacities of the National Mine Action Authority. The Netherlands further shared their interest in plans for South Sudan to establish a national platform for mine action in Juba.

Chairperson Jurkuch took the floor to express his sincere gratitude to the Netherlands. Chairperson Jurkuch mentioned that since the beginning of its mine clearance programme, South Sudan has relied on international support to address its contamination and noted the challenges the country faces due to reductions in international support.

UNMAS (South Sudan, online) took the floor to thank the Netherlands for their support to the South Sudan mine action programme and to share that due to this funding, 1 mechanical clearance team has been redeployed. UNMAS noted that this is exactly the kind of support required by South Sudan.

MAG (online) took the floor to provide a perspective from international mine action organisations in the country. MAG outlined several factors affecting implementation, including insecurity, that limits access to operational areas, increased pressure on cleared land from returnees, which pressures organisations to clear more land faster, however, funding challenges constrain this response. MAG welcomes increased focus on the impact of mine clearance, particularly as an enabler to other development initiatives. In this regard, this approach increases the engagement of the mine action sector with other sectors to better sequence mine action activities and better demonstrate the impact of mine action in South Sudan. MAG also shared recommendations including expanding land release methodologies, improving technical and non-technical survey, increasing national capacity beyond risk education, and promoting alignment of current work plan, as provided in South Sudan's extension request (2025-2030), with the national mine action strategy (2024-2028), and a greater focus on resource mobilisation. MAG also suggested leveraging new technology, public-private partnerships, and reinforcing skill transfer to national

actors, as well as greater collaboration with regional mine action centres and other relevant bodies.

Japan expressed appreciation for South Sudan's efforts and noted Japan's ongoing cooperation with UNMAS to provide capacity enhancement of the NMAA in further building the effective coordination of mine action in the country. Japan also highlighted the tri-angular approach of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), South Sudan and the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) to build national capacity through joint training workshops.

The Mine Detection Centre, Afghanistan, noted the long-standing cooperation between the NMAA and the Centre. The Centre offered the deployment of mine detection dogs and modified equipment for clearance, pending transport arrangements.

South Sudan also emphasised the continued need for support for victim assistance initiatives. South Sudan reported over 3,800 survivors to date and called for support in rehabilitation, psychosocial and health services in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

UNMAS (Geneva) took the floor to express their optimism for South Sudan to complete clearance by 2030. In this regard, UNMAS encouraged representatives of States to express their support to the UNMISS through their representatives in New York. UNMAS indicated that there was a good understanding of exactly what resources South Sudan requires to finish the job in this timeline.

UNMAS (South Sudan, online) shared that the UN Mission mandate has been extended for a further 12 months until 30 April 2026, including support to UNMAS. UNMAS reminded participants of the concept note circulated in advance of the meeting which outlines three components: i) support for mechanical clearance capacities, ii) continued national capacity building, and iii) establishing a capacity to respond to residual threats, including projected costs.

South Sudan took the floor to thank UNMAS for their input and highlighted the need to support national entities through UNMAS, UNMISS and international organisations, in order to build national capacities once completion of mine clearance obligations has been achieved. South Sudan further thanked the Mine Detection Centre for their input and kind offer of assistance. South Sudan also thanked Japan and JICA for their grateful support, remarking on the outstanding support Japan has provided the country.

The Director of the ISU took the floor to welcome South Sudan's engagement in the Individualised Approach and welcome South Sudan's submission of a timely extension request. The Director further encouraged the establishment of a national coordination platform in Juba to support ongoing resource mobilisation and regular dialogue between all stakeholders.

Closing summary and follow-up

In closing, Ambassador Deng expressed his appreciation to all partners and donors, including those joining online, for their continued support, with particular appreciation to the Netherlands. He reaffirmed the Government of South Sudan's commitment to completing clearance by 2030, and potentially earlier with sustained support.

Ms. Sofie Kallehauge, as moderator, thanked all participants for their contributions and confirmed that a meeting summary report would be prepared and circulated to participants and also published on South Sudan's country page on the Convention website.

For further information on South Sudan's mine action programme, please direct queries to:

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- Mr. Zehrudin Sukanovic, Chief Mine Action, UNMAS/UNMISS, email: sukanovic@un.org

For any other matter, please contact the Implementation Support Unit: isu@apminebanconvention.org