

## PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Mine Action Service

Juba, South Sudan

### **South Sudan is granted until 9 July 2026 to clear all anti-personnel mines**

**Juba, 20 November 2020** - On 20 November 2020, the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction*, also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or the *Ottawa Treaty*, unanimously granted the request from the Government of the Republic of South Sudan for a five-year extension, until 9 July 2026, in order to complete the clearance of all anti-personnel mine fields areas in the country in order to fulfill its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Meeting of the States Parties was held through a virtual format from 16-20 November. Nearly 500 delegates representing States, and international and non-governmental organizations registered for participation. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) supported South Sudan's National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) to participate through the provision of video-conference facilities.

South Sudan's extension request has come about after the realization that clearing all of the country's mined areas would not be possible by the original deadline of 9 July 2021, that being ten years after South Sudan entered the Convention. Since joining the Convention, South Sudan has reduced the official estimate of 404 square kilometres of ground that was suspected on being contaminated to the current estimate of 19.5 square kilometres that remain to be cleared.

UNMAS and the national and international mine action organizations have all collaborated with the NMAA to analyze the remaining contamination and the available clearance resources in order to develop a credible and coherent plan for the completion of the remaining hazards. Together these actors concluded that a further five years will be needed to complete the task of clearing all of the remaining mine fields, cluster munition strikes and battlefields.

South Sudan's plan is conditional on the peace deal holding and calls for the configuration of the existing clearance teams to field more efficient (larger) teams and calls upon the international community to increase funding for the sector.

Records show that since 2004, more than five thousand South Sudanese have been killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance (1,398 killed (including at least 249 children), and 3,718 have been injured (717 were children)). Since 2004, the sector-wide clearance effort has found and destroyed more than a million explosive items including over 33,000 anti-personal mines, 5,900 anti-tank mines and 74,000 cluster munitions since 2004 by various mine action partners. The complete elimination of mine fields in South Sudan will provide a safer environment for the population as well as supporting resettlement and long-term socioeconomic development.

The Meeting of the States Parties applauded South Sudan's extension request, describing it as "*exemplary, clear and credible*". In delivering the presentation that summarized the extension request Hon Jurkuch Barach, Chairperson of the National Mine Action Authority said "*the significant*

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*progress that has been made clearly indicates that completion is not a dream but a very achievable reality”.*

Richard Boulter, the Senior Programme Manager of UNMAS South Sudan commented “*Sustained peace in the country and continued international support will be key to completing the clearance of South Sudan’s minefields. While the national funding is very limited, sustained international support for humanitarian mine action is crucial to making the plan happen.*”

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