

## ICBL comments on the Extension Request of South Sudan

*ISC meetings, 30 June – 2 July 2020*

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

This is South Sudan's first request for extending its clearance deadline and we hope it will also be its last one. This is a well-written, exemplary request with clear explanation and plans, both qualitative and quantitative.

We assume the request has been prepared with the assistance of UNMAS and/or UNMISS, and its achievement is contingent on the continued support of both agencies.

South Sudan is requesting a full five years, until July 2026. This means that South Sudan will not have completed clearance before the end of 2025. However, the request covers the clearance of contamination including landmines, anti-vehicle mines, cluster munitions and other ERW. Perhaps - if feasible and in line with humanitarian priority - South Sudan could prioritize clearance of its landmine contamination to meet its obligations under Art. 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty by the end of 2025.

It is also to be commended, that while South Sudan is not a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, it also plans to complete the clearance of all cluster munitions within its territory in this time frame. South Sudan should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions without delay as this may open up more funding sources for mine action work and speed up its overall completion efforts.

Among positive points of the request we note the following:

- South Sudan appears to have a clear picture of the remaining contamination. The actual amount of remaining contaminated land is 24.6 km<sup>2</sup> and includes antipersonnel mine fields, antivehicle minefields, mined roads, cluster strikes and ERW. The total area of mine contamination is therefore 16.8 km<sup>2</sup>. Of this 5.5 km<sup>2</sup> are confirmed contamination and 11.4 km<sup>2</sup> suspected. The figures for contamination are also broken down by region.
- The request makes it clear that the estimate of contaminated land in the Greater Upper Nile region is excessive, and that it is expected that survey work will drastically reduce the actual clearance requirement - up to 80% of the area could be cancelled through non-technical survey.
- The request also notes that new tasks are still being found, and takes it into account in the estimates for the workplans.
- The workplan is very clear and outlines the requirements for completion of clearance in each of the three regions. It outlines the size of the areas to be cleared, the type of contamination, and the type of teams required, and based on the established clearance rates - the number of months for clearance for each hazardous area is estimated.
- The workplan estimates are based on proven clearance rates and are worked out accurately according to the different clearance methods.
- The team capacity is clearly stated in terms of size of teams and number of teams required over the five-year period for the different tasks. The current capacity is noted

as similar to the projections in the workplan, although the capacity needs to be reconfigured into larger teams.

- South Sudan also has a Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023 and the national mine action standards are in line with IMAS but adapted to the local situation and updated regularly.
- There is extensive information provided on the risk education work and plans, as well as gender strategy.

Among the points that require additional clarifications or further follow-up we note the following:

- The plan requires an increase in funding. Currently more than 80% of funding for clearance is coming from UNMISS. Since the future of UNMISS is uncertain and there is a risk of UNMISS redirecting funding to other priorities, which may seriously impede the current plan, it is important to know what mitigation measures are in place to ensure South Sudan will be able to implement the plan presented in this request. It would be also useful to receive more information on the commitment and likelihood of UNMISS and UNMAS' diversion of priorities.
- The government of South Sudan is only providing funding to the running of National Mine Action Authority but not to operations. It would be pertinent for the government to consider providing funding for clearance operations and develop a stronger resource mobilisation strategy in line with its own strategic plan.
- The request notes that there needs to be an increase in clearance capacity if South Sudan was to meet the goal of all clearance being completed by 2025 (rather than July 2026). South Sudan should clarify how much additional capacity and funding would be required to achieve this.

We would like to call on all states, as well as UNMISS and UNMASS, to continue their support for South Sudan (both technically & financially) in fast-tracking its clearance.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to call on South Sudan to accede to the sister Convention on Cluster Munitions ahead of its 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Conference this year, and to make every possible effort to become mine-free by 2025.