

Mr President, Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, allow me first to express my sincere gratitude for inviting me for this important meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and for permitting me this opportunity to update you on the significant progress that South Sudan has made with regards to its efforts to clear the country of these weapons.

Under the leadership of the National Mine Action Authority, South Sudan made significant progress in the last eighteen months, not only in clearing the hazards, but also in developing an accurate picture of the remaining contamination. In 2018, we worked closely with all operators and the staff of the United Nations Mine Action Service to undertake a review of all hazard reports, which led to the cancellation of 29 tasks and the reclassification of 17 tasks that had previously been incorrectly classed as battlefields. This effort led to a net reduction of 12 tasks but an increase in the estimate of contamination area of 44,072m². In addition, increased freedom of movement allowed our survey teams to identify 25 previously unknown strike areas estimated at 1,173,124m². I stress that all of these “new” tasks date to the War of Independence and that there has been no use of cluster munitions in South Sudan in recent years. Of some concern the on-going clearance efforts led to some significant revisions of the contaminated area that resulted in 4,867,606 m² being added to the database.

However, on a more positive note I am pleased to report that 33 tasks were completed in 2018 and that was 3,595 sub-munitions were destroyed for a total clearance area of 5,143,406 m². In addition in the first six months of 2019 our teams have completed the clearance of 17 tasks and destroyed 2,075 sub-munitions from 2,422,666 m². All of these movements have resulted in our estimate of contamination now standing at 123 tasks that extend over a suspected hazardous area of 6,029,795m².

Mr President I must report that the evidence of the last eighteen months shows us that our current estimate of contamination is almost certainly smaller than the reality. Analysis of the clearance work undertaken in recent years shows us that the average clearance task in South Sudan is actually around ten hectares in size. If we use this measure to project a more realistic estimate of the clearance requirement then the figure doubles from six square kilometres to twelve.

Although this is a depressing revelation I would remind the room that in the last eighteen months the teams working in my country have cleared more than 7.5 square kilometres of ground, which means that at the current clearance rates then it is reasonable to project that, given sustained peace, all remaining hazards should be cleared in a small number of years.

As the audience will know the politicians in South Sudan have been very focused on developing an agreement to end the fighting that has gone on in my country for too long, and one consequence of this is that the parliament has not yet managed to pass the legislation that will allow South Sudan to join the convention. This process should be completed shortly.

The main challenge to delivery have been:

- The fighting that has persisted across the country since the return to war in 2013,
- Waning support for the clearance operators.
- A lack of resources and support to the NMAA have further undermined our ability to respond.

Mr President, South Sudan believes it has a realistic picture of the extent of remaining cluster munitions hazards and a capacity that can clear it. South Sudan is committed to honouring its

obligations to this international instrument and remains determined to become a States Part Member to the Convention.

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