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Sudan Launches National Mine Action Authority

Qadeem K. Tariq

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The Republic of Sudan signed the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention on December 3, 1997, and following its ratification on March 5, 2003, the Convention entered into force for Sudan on April 1, 2004. The National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) is established on the basis of four domestic bodies: 1. National Mine Action Committee 2. General Secretariat of the NMAC 3. National Mine Action Center (based in Khartoum) 4. Regional Mine Action Center in southern Sudan (based in Juba). The NMAC is co-chaired by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and the Minister of Internal Affairs, with the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs designated as Secretary-General of the NMAC. The NMAC is composed of representatives from 13 ministries of the Government of National Unity (GOUU); two commis- sioners from the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS); and one representative from the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The establishment of the NMAA addresses one of the key requirements of the Mine Ban Convention in terms of implementation measures. The NMAA will serve as the national policy and regulatory body for mine action in the country. In addition, it will deal with all matters related to the obligations of Sudan under the Mine Ban Convention, which includes mine-action legislation, development of national mine-action implementing structures, identification and clearance of suspected mined areas, destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, and assistance to landmine/unexploded ordnance victims. Finally, the NMAA will ensure allocation of funds for mine action in the national budget.

Establishing the NMAA

With technical and advisory support from UNDP-Sudan, the National Mine Action Authority was established by Presidential Decree No. 299, dated 24 Dec. 2005, in accordance with Article 58 (1) of the Internal Peace Agreement (IPA) for 2005 and Chapter VI (8.6.6) of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The NMAC is composed of four domestic bodies: 1. National Mine Action Committee 2. General Secretariat of the NMAC 3. National Mine Action Center (based in Khartoum) 4. Regional Mine Action Center in southern Sudan (based in Juba). The NMAC is co-chaired by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and the Minister of Internal Affairs, with the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs designated as Secretary-General of the NMAC. The NMAC is composed of representatives from 13 ministries of the Government of National Unity (GOUU); two commis- sioners from the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS); and one representative from the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The establishment of the NMAA addresses one of the key requirements of the Mine Ban Convention in terms of implementation measures. The NMAA will serve as the national policy and regulatory body for mine action in the country. In addition, it will deal with all matters related to the obligations of Sudan under the Mine Ban Convention, which includes mine-action legislation, development of national mine-action implementing structures, identification and clearance of suspected mined areas, destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, and assistance to landmine/unexploded ordnance victims. Finally, the NMAA will ensure allocation of funds for mine action in the national budget.

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in the country. The Commissioner General of Sudan’s Humanitarian Aid Commission also presented highlights of the govern-ment’s vision and plans for addressing the landmine- and ERW-contamination problems in the country and priority areas for assistance.

The presentations were followed by an hour of open discussion and comments among various ministries, national and in-ternational organizations, U.N. agencies and individuals. The main discussion points included the following:

- All the parties appreciated and welcomed the establishment of the NMAA and stressed that address-
ing the landmine/ERW problem in Sudan must be taken as a “one country approach,” with unified national planning, coordination and imple-
nentation across Sudan.
- Sudanese ownership and leadership are vital to addressing Sudan’s landmine/ERW contamination problem in the long term through the development of a pool of qualified, trained and experienced national staff.
- The building of local and national capacities should be given priority in the projects implemented by the United Nations and international-ist organizations.
- The NMAA will review, revise, validate and implement pre-
vious memoranda of understanding/agreements, policy frameworks and strategy frameworks related to mine action in Sudan.
- The NMAA will hold broad-based, stakeholder engagement meetings and dis-
cussions with all concerned national bodies, the United Nations, donor communities, and national and intern-
ational civil-society organizations and invite them to participate in a comprehensive strategy based on practical work planning. The NMAA will re-convolve as soon as the detailed technical and management plans are ready.

Closing session. The presentations came to a close with the statement of Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice President of the Republic of Sudan and President of the GOSU.

Mayardit thanked the United Nations, the donor community and all other or-
nizations that have assisted and supported the Sudanese authorities and people in addressing the landmine/ERW contamination problem in Sudan. He wel-
come the establishment of the NMAA as a milestone in addressing the landmine/ERW problem in the country and requested all concerned national bodies, the United Nations, the donor community and all na-
tional and international operators to work closely with the NMAA in addressing the landmine- and ERW-contamination prob-
lem in Sudan. Mayardit stated that in addi-
tion to the efforts of the GOSU, the GOSS will take all necessary measures in support of the NMAA to establish an effective national-com-
mitment mechanism by providing a na-
tional platform to all mine-action actors and stakeholders in the country.

Mayardit further stated that the Republic of Sudan and its people will ultimately have to address the landmine/ERW-contamination problem in the long term. Therefore, he made a strong appeal to all the U.N. agencies, the donor community and all other national and international bodies to work closely with the concerned national authorities within the framework of the NMAA. This support will contribute to building national management and operational capacities, thereby enhance-
ing national ownership and leadership. In addition, he appealed to the donor commu-
ity to allocate special funds to build local and national mine-action capacities.

Conclusion. With the highest level of political com-
mittance, establishment of the NMAA and the heavy involvement of the United Nations and the international donor community, the prospects of successful projects in Sudan seen very positive. Of the 1,000 suspected mined areas identified so far, 270 of which have already been cleared by the implement-
ing partners of the United Nations and national and international organizations.

The number of key supply and access routes to land used for agriculture and third to any land used for grazing. As a result of EMADO’s humanitarian-demining operations, which began in May 2002, more than 20.3 million square meters (about 8 square miles) of land inhabited by mines has already been cleared. About 1,291 anti-personnel mines and 209 anti-tank mines and 20,410 pieces of UXO have been found and destroyed, with an immense number of fragments collected and eliminated.

In the coming years, EMADO plans to increase its output considerably. This, of course, can be accomplished through proper utilization of its experience and by employing additional technical and operational measures, including machines.

In light of these facts, and if the ELIS data is more or less considered to fall around 2,443 square kilometers (943 square miles), then the impacted communities and mine-infested lands would take a number of years to tackle. Therefore, the EMADO would like to employ further action prevention meth-
ods including using demining robot machines and taking various technical measures, and is currently preparing its proposal.

The EMADO for four years, has prepared the UNDP Senior Advisor’s Course presented by the Mine Action Information Center, as well as many other mine-action related workshops in different countries. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Addis Ababa University.

by Zewdu Derebe (Ethiopian Mine Action Office)