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## Center for International Rehabilitation

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# Sudan Launches National Mine Action Authority

On 7 March 2006, the Government of National Unity in Sudan with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme–Sudan officially launched the country's National Mine Action Authority at Friendship Hall, in Khartoum, Sudan. The new NMAA gathers the other mine-action entities in the country under its umbrella and represents Sudan's commitment to confronting and eventually eliminating its landmine and explosive remnants of war problem.

by Qadeem Khan Tariq [ United Nations Development Programme ]

The Republic of Sudan is one of Africa's most heavily landmine- and explosive-remnants-of-war-affected countries. The true extent of the problem in Sudan largely remains unknown as a country-wide Impact Survey has just recently been initiated to measure both the scope and impact of the situation. However, current assessments indicate that Africa's longest civil war has left 21 of the 26 states of Sudan affected by landmine- and ERW-contamination that threatens the daily life of civilians, impedes the country's economic recovery and development, and delays the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their hometowns.

The United Nations Development Programme is the lead U.N. agency providing comprehensive management, technical and financial support to the relevant national authorities in Sudan on mine-action capacity-building issues. The UNDP is assisted in its mission by the United Nations Mission in Sudan, the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNICEF and several national and international organizations. The primary objectives of UNDP–Sudan mine-action efforts include assisting Sudanese authorities to:

- Put in place the required legal and institutional frameworks for mine action
- Build the capacities of concerned authorities to plan, manage, coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate all mine-action activities in the country
- Build sustainable national capacities to undertake mine-risk education, demining and victim-assistance activities
- Mainstream mine action into national recovery and development plans and the national budget
- Ensure physical and socioeconomic rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine/ERW victims
- Develop a long-term resource-mobilization strategy

The Republic of Sudan signed the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention<sup>1</sup> on 4 Dec. 1997, and following its ratification on 23 Oct. 2003, the Convention entered into force for Sudan on 1 April 2004.

## 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 Interim Constitution for 2005 and Chapter VI (8.6.6) of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.<sup>2</sup> The NMAA is composed of four elements:

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 Minister of National Defense, with the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs designated as the Secretary-General of the NMAC. The NMAC is composed of representatives from 13 ministries of the Government of National Unity (GONU), two representatives 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.

## The Official Launching Ceremony

**Opening session.** About 250 representatives from various government ministries and departments, diplomatic missions, the donor community, U.N. agencies, national and international civil-society organizations, investment bodies and oil companies attended the NMAA's official launching ceremony. Several national and deputy ministers of the GONU, representatives of the GOSS and senior officials from the United Nations including UNMAS, the UNDP, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Mission in Sudan also participated. Additionally, the opening session was attended and addressed by:

- Republic President, His Excellency Mr. Omar Hassan Ahmad El-Bashir
- His Excellency Mr. Kostis Manibe, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs
- Lt. General Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein, Minister of Defense
- His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Haroun, Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs (and Secretary-General of NMAC)
- Dr. Francis M. Kai-Kai, Representative for the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator of the U.N. System in Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

All the speakers welcomed the establishment of the NMAA and described it as a milestone in the establishment of a national mine-action legislative and institutional framework.

In his opening address, Haroun highlighted the key responsibilities of the NMAA. On behalf of the GONU, the GOSS and the NMAA, he extended his gratitude and appreciation to the U.N. community, the donor community, and all national and international organizations for their valuable support to Sudan in addressing its landmine- and ERW-contamination problem. He also expressed his hope that this support would not only continue but increase in the years to come.

Addressing the opening session on behalf of the Deputy SRS/G/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator of the U.N. System in Sudan, Kai-Kai congratulated the government and people of Sudan for the bold and progressive move to establish the NMAA in order to address one of the most serious challenges of post-conflict rehabilitation

and reconstruction. He expressed hope that this body will provide a national platform for the coordination and consolidation of all mine-action-related issues and activities in Sudan and serve in the best interests of landmine- and ERW-affected communities, landmine survivors and the larger Sudanese population.

Kai-Kai highlighted the fact that within the U.N. system, UNDP is the focal agency for the development of national mine-action capacities. UNDP will work closely with the NMAA to develop the required institutional framework and operational capacities to pave the way for active national engagement, national ownership and national leadership. At the end, he assured the GONU, the GOSS, the donor community and civil-society organizations of the United Nations' determination and commitment to provide all possible support to Sudan in addressing its landmine/ERW contamination.

Addressing the opening session, President El-Bashir highlighted the importance of establishing the NMAA as one of the first fruits of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on 9 Jan. 2005, and as a strong indication of the commitment and determination of the Republic of Sudan to address its landmine- and ERW-contamination problem.

El-Bashir re-affirmed that, as a State Party to the Mine Ban Convention, the Republic of Sudan is committed and determined to achieve a complete and comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines in the country. This can happen through the development and implementation of a comprehensive national mine-action framework and strategy. Such a strategy will include the establishment of the necessary legislative and institutional frameworks. Additionally, this strategy will require the development of national management and operational capacities in order to undertake the provision of mine-risk education, survey and clearance of mine-affected areas, assistance to landmine survivors, and the destruction of stockpiled AP mines. The NMAA will serve as the national focal body for achieving the mine-action goals and objectives of the country. El-Bashir asked the institutions within the governments of GONU and GOSS, as well as the United Nations, the donor community and all concerned, to unify and increase their efforts in addressing the landmine- and ERW-contamination problem in Sudan.

El-Bashir also said the GONU has included mine action in its national budget for 2006 and will allocate funds for mine action in the coming years. Realizing the long-term nature of Sudan's landmine- and ERW-contamination problem, El-Bashir urged that GONU streamline mine action into all reconstruction, recovery, and development plans and projects. He highlighted that, given the magnitude of the landmine/ERW contamination, Sudan would need financial and technical support as well as the cooperation of the donor community, the United Nations, and national and international institutions for many years to come.

**Working session.** During this session, representatives of the National Mine Action Center and key U.N. mine-action agencies (UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCFR) gave presentations highlighting the magnitude of the landmine- and ERW-contamination problem in Sudan, achievements to date, ongoing activities/projects, the funding situation, challenges faced and future plans. In particular, presentations highlighted the following: Of the 950 suspected mined areas identified so far, 240 have been cleared; 3,221 kilometers (2,001 miles) of roads have been verified as safe; 617 kilometers (383 miles) of roads have been cleared; and more than 571,000 Sudanese citizens have received mine-risk education.

In addition, the importance and urgency of the development of sustainable national mine-action capacities to enhance Sudanese ownership and leadership in addressing the country's landmine/ERW problem was stressed. Availability of limited funding for mine action, complex political and administrative systems, limited air and land access to various parts of the country, and the country's poor communication system were identified as a few key challenges in addressing landmine/ERW contamination



in the country. The Commissioner General of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission also presented highlights of the government's vision and plans for addressing the landmine- and ERW-contamination problems in the country and priority areas for assistance.<sup>4</sup>

The presentations were followed by an hour of open discussion and comments among various ministries, national and international 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 addressing the landmine/ERW problem in Sudan must be taken as a "one country approach," with unified national planning, coordination and implementation 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 organizations.
- The NMAA will review, revise, validate and consolidate all previous memoranda of understanding/agreements, policy frameworks and strategic frameworks related to mine action in Sudan.
- The NMAA will hold broad-based, comprehensive consultations and discussions with all concerned national bodies, the United Nations, the donor community, and national and international civil-society organizations in order to develop a comprehensive strategy based on practical work plans. The NMAA will re-convene as soon as these consultations and discussions have taken place.

**Closing session.** The launching ceremony came to end with the statement of Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice

President of the Republic of Sudan and President of the GOSS.

Mayardit thanked the United Nations, the donor community and all other organizations and institutions that have assisted and supported the Sudanese authorities and people in addressing the landmine/ERW-contamination problem in Sudan. He welcomed 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 national and international operators to work closely with the NMAA in addressing the landmine- and ERW-contamination problem in Sudan. Mayardit stated that in addition to the efforts of the GONU, the GOSS will take all necessary measures in support of the NMAA to establish an effective national-coordination mechanism by providing a national 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 enhancing national ownership and leadership. In addition, he appealed to the donor community to allocate special funds to build local and national mine-action capacities.

### Conclusion

With the highest level of political commitment, establishment of the NMAA and heavy involvement of the United Nations and the international donor community, the prospects of mine-action developments in Sudan seem very positive. Of the 1,000 suspected mined areas identified so far, 270 have already been cleared by the implementing partners of the United Nations and national and international organizations. A number of key supply and access routes/roads in the central and southern parts of the

country have already been verified to be safe or cleared. With these positive developments taking place, the problem of landmine/ERW contamination in Sudan may be contained very soon and Sudan will be able to meet its obligations under the Mine Ban Convention. The NMAA will further assist Sudan with continued mine-action progress. ♦

*See Endnotes, page 109*



Qadeem Khan Tariq is an Afghan national and holds a master's degree in general management with more than 10 years of comprehensive experience in humanitarian mine action. He has held key managerial positions in the execution of various mine-action capacity-building projects in Afghanistan, Yemen, Jordan and Iraq. Tariq is currently working as the UNDP-Sudan Senior Technical Advisor for Mine-Action Capacity Development, based in Khartoum, Sudan.

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