



COMMUNIQUÉ

Geneva, 18 November 2011

South Sudan: from the Geneva Call *Deed of Commitment* to the Ottawa Convention

In depositing its notification of succession to the United Nations 11 November last, the Republic of South Sudan has become the 158th State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, commonly known as the Ottawa Convention.

“We congratulate the new Government of South Sudan for having taken this commitment, only five months after declaring independence”, said Elisabeth Decrey Warner, President of Geneva Call. “We know that the leaders of South Sudan, when they were engaged in armed opposition, were already concerned by the effects of landmines on their people and decided as early as 2001 to renounce the use of anti-personnel mines” added Ms. Decrey Warner. “The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was one of the first armed non-State actors to sign the Geneva Call *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action (Deed of Commitment)*. South Sudan’s succession to the Ottawa Convention today is in continuity with this humanitarian spirit” she concluded.

The *Deed of Commitment* is an innovative mechanism enabling armed non-State actors, which cannot become parties to the Ottawa Convention, to adhere to its norms. The SPLM/A fought against the Sudanese Government from 1983 to 2005 and is today the ruling party in South Sudan.

Indeed, the signing of the *Deed of Commitment* by the SPLM/A in 2001 was key in the Sudanese Government’s decision to ratify the Ottawa Convention in 2003. According to Martin Barber, at the time Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, “Sudan would not have felt able to ratify the Treaty if the SPLM/A had not already made a formal commitment to observe its provisions in the territory under its control.”

There have been other examples where armed non-State actors that have signed the *Deed of Commitment* were instrumental in the acceptance of the Ottawa Convention by their respective States. In Iraq, senior officials of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, who had worked with Geneva Call to sign the *Deed of Commitment* in 2002, continued to promote the anti-personnel mine ban in their new capacity when they became members of the national government after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003. Iraq joined the Convention four years later.