



**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, UGANDA**

**LEADER OF DELEGATION TO
THE 6TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES IN ZAGREB, CROATIA**

27TH NOVEMBER, TO 2ND DECEMBER 2005

MINE ACTION IN UGANDA

Introduction

Madam Chairperson, I wish first of all to congratulate you upon your election as president of the sixth meeting of the states parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. I also congratulate all the members of your team upon their election.

On the onset, Uganda signed the Ottawa Convention on 3rd Dec 1997, ratified it on 25th Feb 1999 and became a state party to the Convention on 1st August 1999. Uganda destroyed its stockpile of anti-personnel mines on 9th July 2003, 6,383 anti personnel mines were destroyed, and 2,400 mines were retained for training purposes. Details of this are included in our Article 7 report, submitted to the Secretary General. This was reported in the 5th meeting of states parties.

The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) engineering unit has for the past decade been carrying out explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) response activities in Uganda, the community has been sensitized to report to the UPDF any suspicious items found. As a result of this, a number of mines and UXOs have been destroyed.

In Uganda, the problem of Mines/UXOs is due to civil wars that have occurred in the country from the mid 1990s, covering mainly the western and the northern parts of the country. The insurgency in the north for example led to the displacement of up to 1.4 million people, over the years this insurgency has been largely suppressed, by the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF). Consequently the Government's pre-occupation currently is to return and resettle the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in areas which are now safe, and re-integrate them into society, in accordance with the National IDPs policy.

This policy provides that areas of return must be mapped, marked and cleared of mines/ UXOs before resettling the people.

Through the Mine Action Programme that the Government has put in place, we have drawn up plans to undertake demining activities in the areas that have experienced insurgency.

Mine/UXO Survey and Assessment

In 2004, the Government with technical support from the Mines Awareness Trust (MAT) a UK based NGO, carried out a needs assessment in Kasese District. Fifty six (56) mine contaminated areas were identified. Through this exercise it was established that the anti-personnel mines used in these areas included; NO.4, PMN-2, type 72, POMZ, PROM-1 and 100/200.

In December 2005 with support from UNDP, the Government is to undertake similar surveys in the Lango and Teso regions i.e. the north and north-eastern parts of the country where IDPs are scheduled to return.

Mine /UXO Clearance/EOD Operations

As a measure to build mine action capacity within the country, the Government has embarked on training relevant personnel in Mine Clearance activities. This is with support from the UK Government through the Nairobi International Mine Action Centre. So far 20 UPDF personnel have completed the training and 40 Police personnel are undergoing the same training. The first two clearance teams are due for deployment in the mined areas in December 2005.

Mine Risk Education/Victims Assistance.

On Mine risk education and Victims assistance, the Government Ministries of Health, Gender, Labor and Social Development have been carrying out the above tasks in close coordination with national and international NGOs, mainly in Northern Uganda. The focus has in the northern part of the country where rebel insurgency has taken a high toll on the local population.

The Ministry of Health in particular has endeavored to develop capacity to coordinate Victims Assistance activities at national level and is assisted in this effort by two international NGOs namely, Association of Volunteers for International Service (AVSI) and Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR).

An advocacy training program targeting landmine survivors in the affected parts of the country is being conducted with support from ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance based in Kampala.

Data on Mine/UXO Victims

Although the actual number of mine/UXO victims is not yet known, a survey conducted by AVSI and the Ministry of Health indicate that from 2004, there are up to 900 victims in the northern region only. Plans are underway to establish a comprehensive victims' data base.

Legislation:

Madam President, in order to effectively handle the dangers of mines/UXOs in an effective and sustainable basis, Government has put in place a legal framework which is due for final approval by Parliament. This will enhance coordinated approaches on managing the mine/UXO problem in the country. A seminar on Mine Action Legislation is planned for February 2006 with assistance from the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The seminar is intended to get the inputs from various stakeholders on the Policy.

Future Plans:

Madam President, in order to put in place an effective and sustainable Mine Action Management programme, it is planned that the following actions will be taken.

- Establishment of a National Mine Action Centre (MAC) by the beginning of 2006, to be followed by a Regional Center in one of the districts in Northern Uganda.
- At least six multi-skilled survey/manual/battle area clearance teams will be fully operational in 2006.
- Targeted Needs – Assessment, Mine risk education, Victims assistance and Re-integration of land mine survivors' activities in Western and Northern Uganda will be undertaken.

- By end of 2006, six mine detection Dog teams will be fielded to conduct technical survey, area reduction and land mine/UXO clearance.
- By mid 2006, the IMSMA System for Mine Action Information Management will be fully operational; to date two officers have finished IMSMA training in Geneva.

Challenges

Madam Chair, to achieve the above plans the following need to be addressed.

- Capacity shortfalls especially in technical skills, logistics and equipment for Mine Detection, removal and destruction of Mine/UXOs.
- Collection of reliable data on mine victims to guide the implementation of Victim Assistance programs.
- Effective coordination of all mine action stakeholders in the country.
- Required funds to take on a range of other mine action activities including Mine Risk Education, Victim Assistance and socio-economic re-integration of survivors.

In conclusion, Madam President, it is our resolve to remain committed to the Ottawa Convention. We therefore call upon the other states parties which have technical and other capacities to assist us accordingly so that we may sustain this resolve.