



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Opening remarks by Ambassador Attilio PACIFICI  
Head of Delegation of the European Union to Uganda  
National Victim Assistance Stakeholder Dialogue,  
10 October 2018**

- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Honourable Members of Parliament
- The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- Members of Civil Society Organizations
- Representatives of the press,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to have been invited to make a few remarks at this important dialogue!

Thank you all for confronting the traffic to be here in Munyonyo this morning. I greatly appreciate your commitment and your presence here today to commence the **National Victim Assistance**

**Stakeholder Dialogue in Uganda.** The objective of this dialogue is to discuss how to take appropriate and much needed action to assist victims of war and persons with disabilities to achieve a dignified, meaningful existence.

Uganda is one of 29 State Parties to Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention most directly affected by anti-personnel mines as it initially had a large amount of mine contamination. Therefore, my first message is to commend the **Government of Uganda** for its strong and continued commitment to the **Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**.

The Convention is a disarmament and humanitarian instrument whose goal is to, “**end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines**”. The Convention was opened for signature in 1997 and entered into force in 1999. To this date, 164 countries have joined it.

At large, the Convention bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines, and

according to Article 6.3 on Victims Assistance, it commits State Parties to, “*do their utmost in providing assistance for the care and rehabilitation, including the social and economic reintegration of mine victims*”. Uganda ratified the Convention on 25 February 1999, and the Convention entered into force for Uganda on 1 August 1999.

In Uganda, mines and explosive remnants of war found in the Northern, North-Eastern, West Nile and Rwenzori sub-regions in Western Uganda predominantly stem from decades of armed conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army. Since Uganda's ratification of the Convention, 46 mine areas have been identified bordering South Sudan, DRC, the Luwero Triangle, West Nile, and the Rwenzori Mountains.

With a reported **6,503 mine destroyed**, Uganda completed its mine clearance operations of all 46 areas, and declared it had met its Article 5 mine

clearance obligations of the Mine Ban Treaty on 28 November 2012.

Unfortunately, the victims of mines in Uganda are many, and many were left disabled. Furthermore, the efforts to provide adequate assistance to victims and reporting on the actions taken have been challenged by various set-backs since the end of demining operations, relating to data collection, monitoring mechanism and constraints in financial resources.

Uganda has, however, proven determined in pursuing its commitment to victim assistance:

Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) along with other stakeholders has invested significant efforts to promote the rights and to address the needs of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities including by developing the **2006 National Policy on Disability** with technical support provided by the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. In 2007, Uganda developed the **Comprehensive Plan of**

**Action on Victim Assistance** to respond to the needs of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

**Since 2008**, Uganda has been a State Party to the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.

**And finally in 2010**, the Uganda Comprehensive Plan of Action on Victim Assistance was **revised and aligned** with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We congratulate Uganda on these important steps!

As one of the world's leading providers of anti-personnel mines alleviation action, the European Union is equally committed to mitigating the effects of war and improving human security in line with the European Security Strategy. In 2017, the Parliament of the European Union approved **Decision 2017/1428** to support State Parties currently implementing victim assistance efforts to integrate the rights of landmine

survivors and other persons with disabilities into wider national frameworks. The Decision aims at providing assistance to the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention and the **Maputo Action Plan**, which consists of 31 'actions' meant to guide efforts, in areas of victim assistance, mine clearance, stockpile destruction and treaty norms promotion among States that are not yet party to the Convention.

This Dialogue is part of the EU's global efforts to advance the rights of persons affected by landmines. To operationalise Decision 2017/1428, two weeks ago, the European Union supported Iraq in a similar dialogue as the one that we are launching today in Uganda. In 2019, we will support a global conference on victim assistance and disability rights. Our aim is fostering a world where no one is left behind.

Therefore, **today we celebrate a victory** in terms of the Government of Uganda and the European Union collaborating to provide much better service provision and support to victim assistance.

Today's dialogue aims at building upon Uganda's achievements and at supporting Uganda in **identifying concrete actions to implement the victim assistance aspects of the Maputo Action Plan**. The Dialogue will bring together relevant government ministries, international and non-governmental organisations, and national and international partners, including development partners.

The Dialogue also seeks to support Uganda in implementing victim assistance and disability rights aspects covered by the Convention on Cluster Munitions – which has been signed but has yet to be ratified by Uganda.

Hopefully, this Dialogue will kick-start the process of developing a national victim assistance action plan to identify challenges, prioritise victims' needs, and mapping required resources for victim assistance implementation. Such action plan could serve as a roadmap for all relevant victim assistance and

disability actors, to identify mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and integration of victim assistance into national policies on human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

On behalf of the European Union, I am proud and honoured to be part of this Dialogue to take the first steps of hopefully a long, productive path of progress on victim assistance and socio-economic development for persons with disabilities in Uganda.

There is a great opportunity to **build on the progress** Uganda has achieved on disability matters and bringing all relevant stakeholders together to one place today will ensure that the first step in the development of Uganda's new action plan is truly inclusive and participatory.

Thank you once again, and I appreciate your active participation.

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