

# CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTIPERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION.

## "THE UGANDAN EXPERIENCE"

### 1.0 BACKGROUND:

Uganda signed the Mine Ban Treaty of the 1977 OTTAWA CONVENTION under the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) on the 3rd of December, 1997. Uganda consequently submitted her instrument of ratification to the UN on the 25th day of February, 1999. The treaty thereof entered into force on the 1st day of August, 1999.

In December 1999, Uganda voted for the UN General Assembly resolution 54/54B for promoting the Treaty.

Considerably, Uganda is fully committed to fulfilling the mandated antecedent and attendant obligations consequent upon the signing of the treaty.

Uganda recognizes the suffering caused by the scourge of antipersonnel mines and has in this regard joined other regional states and urged their active participation in ridding the region of antipersonnel land mines. Uganda belongs to the wider East African Regional grouping which is inclusive of the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. The first regional meeting was held in Djibouti, last year where Uganda was ably represented.

### 2.0 OVERVIEW:

Whereas Uganda does not produce, stock pile, use nor transfer land mines, their presence and adverse effect of killing and maiming both soldiers and civilians has continually been registered.

This status of affairs has grown out of the modus operandi of the convention which seeks to encourage compliance through mutual transparency and cooperation rather than through an intrusive and adversarial verification mechanism.

### THE MINE PROBLEM:

In Uganda, the rebels of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) operating mainly in the districts of Northern Uganda, have continually traversed the expanse region and have most a time laid antipersonnel land mines indiscriminately. These have to a great extent brought untold suffering to the populace of the northern regions of Uganda.

Whereas, the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) has greatly reversed the situation by constantly demining the mined areas and destroying the land mines on spot, the long story of rebel planted mines is not yet over, Unknown and unmarked landmines do still exist in the Northern region of Uganda.. The UPDF has particularly marked the mined area of the Ngamoromo Hills in Gulu District and is yet to clear this area.

Ngamoromo Hills was a Safe Haven for the LRA rebels.

On the Western mountainous axis of the Ugandan border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there also exists another mined area. These mines too, were planted by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels, who used to operate mainly from the Rwenzori mountains.

These too, were planted indiscriminately given the fact that the rebels were using the mining process as a protective mechanism to hinder the hamper the UPDP pursuit.

As afore mentioned, these mines still pose a great threat to the rural populace. Presently, and in the meantime, these suspect mined areas are cordoned off to prevent civilian penetration.

#### MINE AWARENESS:

The UPDF in collaboration with the local NGO's have effortlessly carried out sensibilisation and mine awareness programmes in form of seminars and workshops to bring the reality of the mine threat to the local people.

One kind of such seminars was recently in the month of April conducted in Kasese town in Western Uganda. Other awareness programmes have also been conducted in Northern Districts of Uganda, particularly in Gulu and Kitgum.

Since the mine problem is mainly a domain of the Military Forces, the Department of Legal Services and especially the office of Research in collaboration with the Inspector General of Government Equipment (IGME) has made various recommendations to the authorities.

These recommendations which are now being considered for implementation include:

i- The adoption of a National Mine Action policy, aimed at providing the country with the necessary human, technical, material and financial resources for the reduction of human casualties caused by landmines.

The objectives of the National Mine Action are to include

- Creating a national capacity in demining.
- Establishing a legal framework for the process of demining activities.
- Ensuring that the plans and the proceedings are consistent with the priorities and goals of the nation.

ii- The establishment of a National Demining Agency, where the role of the Agency is to include:

- To maintain a national database and to provide information for mine action activities.
- To act as a Coordination mechanism and focal point for all mine action activities.
- To follow up and supervise demining activities.
- To develop and supervise a sustainable, comprehensive and integrated mine Action for the country.
- To propose strategies to the government in the area of demining.
- To participate in resource mobilization for the support of Mine Action in Uganda.

iii- The Incorporation of the Mine Ban Treaty in our domestic law under a national implementation legislation.

N.B. The Directorate of Legal Services in the UPDF, has already Drafted a Bill aimed at the elimination of antipersonnel mines in line with the provisions of the OTTAWA CONVENTION.

The Bill will soon be discussed by the Army Council, in preparation to tabling it before Cabinet and Parliament,

**VICTIM ASSISTANCE:**

The UPDF, duly established a rehabilitation Centre at Mubende known as Wubende Rehabilitation Centre (MRC) , here all casualty Soldiers are rehabilitated under one Umbrella with the object of transforming them into useful citizens under the Banner of "disability is not inability". Other assistance is within the Military hospitals of Mbuya, Gulu and Bombo. However, all funding is from the National Treasury with little input from the donor community.

Civilian victims are assisted within the local hospitals and organizations such as the ICRC have been of great assistance in this regard. However, the mine problem in the world today needs concerted effort, and I believe that together there is nothing insurmountable,

It is important to note that this is the first time Uganda is attending the Intersessional meetings and only attended at an International level during the Bamako Meeting.

I would therefore request that Uganda continually be involved in the Intersessional work programme and other fora of the kind.

I extend my sincere compliments and felicitations to the organizers of this Conference and especially the Austrian Embassy hat specifically sponsored Uganda's attendance in this particular meeting.

Thanks very much.