



Government of Uganda

Comments by

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Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I salute you all and warm regards from Uganda. The Ugandan delegation to the 8MSP here in Jordan is led by Hon. Suleiman Madada, the Minister of State for Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development. He will later make comments on the victim assistance component of mine action and highlight on the recently drafted Victim Assistance Plan for Uganda.

The comments I make today in regard to the implementation of Article five of the Mine Ban Treaty in Uganda, are additional information to what was presented last year during the Seventh Meeting of States Parties held in Geneva. .

To begin with, on clearance dead line, the plan is to clear all identified mined areas in Uganda as per the requirements of Article five by August 2009. There is strong will and support by Government of Uganda to ensure this is achieved. In so doing mine action has been integrated with in the Plan for Recovery and Development of Northern Uganda (PRDP).

De-mining Capacity: Over the past two years, the required national demining capacities have been built in partnership with the Nairobi International Mine Action Training Center (IMATC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the UNDP country office as highlighted in the updates we made last year. Below is additional information:

- By March 2008 we shall have residual de-mining capacity of twelve (12) multi purpose demining teams and two quality control / post clearance survey teams in place and operational.
- All the demining staff has been seconded from the Ministries of Defense /Uganda Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) and Internal Affairs/Uganda Police. This is done through memoranda of understanding executed between these Ministries and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) which has been mandated to coordinate the implementation of Mine Action in Uganda.
- Currently the demining capacity stand at seventy seven (77) personnel consisting of six multi purpose demining teams i.e. (12 Persons) and one quality control/post clearance survey team (5 Persons)
- The focus is to clear and release land as one of the pre requisites for safe and protected return of internally displaced persons (IDPs).The return of IDPs in Northern Uganda, has gained momentum as a result of positive peace negotiations currently going on between the Lord's Resistance Army Rebels (LRA) and Government of Uganda in Juba-Southern Sudan.

Progress in Demining

- Additional 46 hazardous areas have been de-mined in the districts of Gulu, Amuru and Kasese, facilitating the safe and protected return of IDPs.

- Demining operations have been completed in Lira district. The area demined is pending quality control.
- National Mine Action Standards have been developed with the help of the Geneva Center for Humanitarian demining (GICHD).

What remains to be done in de-mining:

- Mine Action needs assessments to be conducted in the Districts of Pader, Oyam (Northern Uganda) and Bundibugyo (Western Uganda), by March 2008. The UNDP is in the final process of contracting out this activity.
- Demining of 153 identified hazardous areas in Kitgum and the remaining hazardous areas in the districts of Gulu, Amuru, Soroti and Kasese

Challenges that may hinder the realisation of Article five dead line:

- Delay in the conclusion of the Peace Agreement in Juba.
- The out standing deployment of an additional search capacity including mine detection dogs for a period of up to 18 months
- Environmental factors such as heavy rains, floods and thick vegetation.
- Challenges related to the direct execution of mine action in Uganda..

Priorities for external assistance

- Deployment of at least two mine detection dog sets for area reduction and quality control
- Need for technical assistance to clear known mine fields in Kitgum district on the border with Southern Sudan preferable with a mechanical demining capacity.
- Increasing the demining capacity to respond faster

Article 4 obligations

- The information submitted in the last year's meeting on stockpile destruction still stand and the report on stockpile destruction carried out in 2003 still stand.
- Additionally, within the framework of the ongoing UNDP supported Small Arms and Light Weapons Project, 120 type 72 APM and 2000 ATM and 460 tonnes of ammunition were destroyed in October 2007, at Nakasongora military range by the Ministry of Defence.

As I conclude Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to recognise the contributions from the like minded development partners that have supported Uganda in addressing the demining challenge, these inter alia are; the German Government, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland and Canada. Lastly I pay special thanks to the GICHD, IMATC and the above all the UNDP for the capacity support so far extended to the Uganda Mine Action Programme.