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Item 11 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of submissions of States Parties
as provided for in Article 5**

**REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR
COMPLETING THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION,
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Submitted by Uganda*

Introduction

1. The mine problem in Uganda originates from civil conflicts and wars that have taken place in the country over the past two decades, mainly in the North, North East, West Nile and the Rwenzori sub-regions in Western Uganda. The conflicts over the last decades resulted in the displacement of up to two million people at its peak with conflicting parties employing a variety of ammunition and mines, causing some of the population to fear falling victim to mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).

2. The actual number of victims in the entire country is not clear, as there has not been a comprehensive survey. According to a partial survey conducted by Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) in 2005 in the Acholi sub region, there have been approximately 2,000 victims of ERW over an 18-year period. As peace returned to the area it was necessary to ensure the safety of returnees by clearing land of the threat of landmines and other ERW as provided for under section three of the Internally Displaced Persons Policy (IDP) 2004.

What is the status of work conducted to date under Uganda's national demining programme?

3. In order to address the mine/ERW problem in Uganda, a National Mine Action Programme (NMAP) was established in 2005 through a preparatory assistance programme implemented through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and funded as one of the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Programme elements of the United Nations Development Programme

* Submitted after due date and as soon as received by the Secretariat.

(UNDP) Uganda Country Office. The overall objective of the NMAP was to create an enabling environment for peace and resettlement, re-integration and socioeconomic recovery of conflict affected populations by: developing the management and technical capacity of the Uganda Mine Action Centre (UMAC); improving the safety of mine affected communities including through improving mine risk education (MRE) capacities to reduce the risks of accidents due to landmines and UXO; meeting the needs of landmine survivors; and, contributing to the growth of the economy of Uganda by returning ERW contaminated land to communities for productive use.

4. In April 2006, UMAC was established in the OPM with the objective of coordinating mine action activities. UMAC works under the guidance of the National Mine Action Steering Committee (NMASC), which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary, OPM. The NMASC comprises representatives from line ministries and other key stakeholders, and operates under the Department for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees of the OPM.

5. During the period of 2006-2007 a needs assessment carried out by the Mines Awareness Trust (MAT) identified a total of 427 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) in parts of the affected areas of Uganda. However, this survey had several limitations and did not provide accurate data that could be used for operational planning purposes. In particular, this survey did not specify the actual threat of landmines but gathered general information on ERW. As a result, verification visits were carried out by UMAC teams to all SHAs with only 1 (Agoro Mountains) of the 427 SHAs identified as a mined area and the remaining SHAs identified as being contaminated by ERW other than anti-personnel mines or not contaminated at all.

6. In November 2008, a general mine action assessment (GMAA) was carried out by UMAC with assistance from Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and Danish Demining Group (DDG). Through the GMAA the area identified by the revisit in Agoro Mountains in Kitgum District on the Uganda-Sudan border was confirmed as a mined area. This area was subsequently sub-divided into 5 mined areas (Agoro 1, Agoro 2, Agoro 3, Agoro 4, Agoro 5) with an approximate total size of 130,000 square metres. In January 2009, an additional GMAA was carried out in Kitgum District leading to the identification of a second mined area in Ngomoromo, which is also located on the Uganda-Sudan border with a total size of 140,000 square metres.

7. In Uganda, clearance operations began in 2006 after developing the capacity of initially 4 teams of UPDF and Ugandan Police Force (UPF) personnel, expanding the capacity to 12 teams in 2008. The UMAC established two centres of control and coordination - the national centre based in Kampala which deals with overall national mine action coordination and management, and the regional centre based in Gulu district which deals with the day-to-day operational matters pertaining to the deployment and tasking of the clearance teams as well as coordination with the district local governments and mine action forums. Clearance work from 2006 to 2008 mainly involved explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) in which a number of UXO and a small number of mines were destroyed. By 2009, 304 of the 428 SHAs had been cleared resulting in the destruction of 61 anti-personnel mines, 12 anti-tank mines, 5,323 items of UXO, and 19,553 small arms ammunition. Additionally, a total of 35 SHAs have been discredited and 89 are pending UXO clearance. It is important to note that 36 of the 61 mines recovered and

destroyed in Uganda are associated with the two areas identified through the GMAA as indicated below and the remaining 24 mines destroyed are nuisance mines.

8. To date, one of the 5 areas in Agoro Mountains (Agoro 1) measuring approximately 30,000 square metres has been confirmed containing mines and is undergoing technical survey and clearance. As of July 2009, a total of 3,180.5 square metres had been cleared culminating in the destruction of 13 mines (type 72 APM). The extent of the remaining areas in Agoro 1 based on the assessment to date is 26,819.5 square metres. The initiation of a technical survey to confirm the presence of mines is pending for the remaining four mined area. The extent of these mined areas base on the assessment to date is approximately 100,000 square metres.

9. In the Ngomoromo mined area measuring approximately 140,000 square metres, technical survey and clearance are ongoing. As of July 2009, a total of 2,874 square metres been cleared culminating in the destruction of 23 mines (type PMD6). The extent of the remaining area to be cleared based on the assessment to date is approximately 137,126 square metres.

10. At completion of the technical survey in the Agoro Mountains and Ngomoromo mined areas, area reduction may result in a smaller area requiring clearance. However, until then, the calculation of the duration of the clearance is being made on the basis that 100 percent of the assessed total size of the mined areas is to be cleared.

11. From 2005 to 2009 a total of US\$ 7,044,214.67 has been invested in demining operations in Uganda. Of this total, the government of Uganda has contributed US\$ 980,117.00. Uganda works closely with the UNDP to acquire funding for its demining program. In this sense it is important to highlight the important contributions from the governments of Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Ireland, Australia and Sweden. The programme has equally received capacity building support from the International Mine Action Training Centre - Nairobi, Cranfield University and James Madison University.

What are the circumstances that impeded Uganda from destroying all anti-personnel mines in mined areas by its deadline?

12. Various circumstances have presented themselves that have impeded Uganda from achieving its mine action goals within the 10-year period allotted by the Convention. Some of the most important circumstances are highlighted below:

- (i) **Late commencement of clearance operations:** Uganda signed the Ottawa Convention in 1997 and ratified it in 1999. While Uganda was expected to start identifying and addressing all mined areas in her jurisdiction at this time, this did not happen until 2006 upon the establishment of the mine action programme and establishment of a clearance team.

- (ii) **Security:** The uncertainty caused by the continuous LRA rebel attacks on the civilian population affected clearance operations in the affected areas. Actual clearance only began in 2006 when the government forces decisively repulsed the rebels from the affected districts.
- (iii) **Resources:** Both material and human resources are required to successfully clear the identified mined areas. The inadequacy in the supply of these resources greatly impeded Uganda's Article 5 clearance obligations. In respect to human resources, only four teams comprised of 41 personnel were seconded from the UPDF and UPF to the mine action programme, forming only two demining teams. This was insufficient to deal with the problem in the time allotted. It was only in 2008 that an additional 26 personnel were added, raising the number to 67. This capacity has resulted in the current progress in demining of the two identified mined areas. Likewise, funding for material resources, equipment, among other requirements, has been insufficient. This situation is aggravated by the fact that not many international mine action partners have been active in Uganda except DDG, which began operations to support the outputs of the national mine action programme in 2008.
- (iv) **Operational problems:** A multiplicity of operational and management challenges also contributed to the further delay in commencing the clearance of the mined areas. For example, while the plan was to commence with the technical survey of the identified areas in Kitgum in January 2009, this only began in June 2009 due to delays in procurement of necessary facilities such as tents, food, water, etc.
- (v) **Meteorological issues:** Unfavourable weather conditions such as heavy rainfall, leading to flooding and thick vegetation curtail the pace of demining work.

What is the proposed duration for the extension and what are reasons for this amount of time?

13. In light of the above circumstances as well as the work pending, Uganda is requesting a total of three (3) years to fulfil its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

What are the humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental implications of the extension?

14. The location of the mined areas is economically viable for agricultural activities. The Agoro mountains is a particularly fertile area where a range of both food crops and cash crops can be grown. Once clearance is completed, this would go a long way in not only improving food security situation in the area but also in raising living standards of the people who have lived under encampment for over two decades. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 people in surrounding villages are affected by these mined areas.

What is Uganda's plan to fulfil its obligations during the extension period?

15. The mine contamination challenge in Uganda is small and geographically limited compared to the majority of the affected countries worldwide. It is also a “simple fix” as the mined areas have been identified and are undergoing technical survey and clearance in the case of Ngomoromo and Agoro 1, and technical survey pending for the four remaining mined areas in Agoro Mountains. With adjustments to the current capacity in terms of an additional 40 deminers, Uganda would be in position to fulfil its obligation in the requested three-year period.

16. The time frame of three years being requested by Uganda is based on several assumptions, including but are not limited to the following: (a) The additional 40 personnel are released, trained, equipped and deployed by December 2009. The details on how this will be achieved are laid down in the Operations Clearance Work Plan August 2009 – August 2012; (b) To complete the mine-clearance work, the donors' commitment for continued support until August 2012 has to be secured. Whilst the Ugandan government will continue to provide the human resources for UMAC operations until and beyond the compliance with international commitments, covering the costs of the salaries for the deminers, the office spaces at the OPM Kampala, and the technical, logistical and material support requires secured external funding and donor support. The estimated annual cost for the mine-clearance operations is US\$ 2.6 million; (c) The weather conditions shall remain favourable for the clearance operations, (d) Security situation shall remain stable throughout the three years of operations; (e) Material and funding support from the international community will be sustained until August 2012; and, (f) Technical and logistics support from DDG or other international mine action agency will be sustained until August 2012.

What are the financial and technical means available to Uganda to fulfil its obligations during the extension period?

17. In order to release land UMAC employs manual demining. The NMAP has a current clearance capacity of 12 fully equipped multi-purpose demining teams, one quality control/assurance team, and an operations management team. Clearance operations, surveys, community liaison and explosive ordnance disposal are being carried out by the multipurpose demining teams seconded from the UPDF and the UPF under the direct management of the UMAC. Total UMAC operational capacity in terms of personnel is 67. Complementing the work of the clearance teams are six mobile teams delivering MRE services and community liaison to communities and schools.

18. The procedure employed during all operations is in conformity with those established in the Uganda Mine Action Standards (UMAS) based on International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The land release criteria, risk and quality management applied, is documented in UMAS Chapter 10. The UMAS is a central part of the overall quality management toolbox utilised in Uganda. The task, quality and risk management chapters alongside with regulating the accreditation procedure are all applied in the demining work and training in the field. These include internal and external quality assurance as well as final quality assurance inspections.

19. The Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) mine action programme in South Sudan has offered to support operations in Uganda with the use of a Minewolf clearance machine in the Ngomoromo minefield. The funding for external support is to be provided by the Government of Norway. A technical assessment to determine the suitability of mechanical clearance took place in August 2009. The period of external support to the mechanical clearance operations is scheduled for January 2010, consisting of use of clearance machinery along the minefield of Ngomoromo. The availability of this additional capacity, will allow Uganda to fulfil its obligations in a shorter time frame, all other factors remaining constant.

20. It is estimated that the total amount necessary to carry out the remaining humanitarian demining work in Uganda is approximately US\$ 6,906,000 with Uganda providing US\$ 1,250,000.
