

WEDNESDAY 11 FEB. 2004

Standing committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies.

Uganda's Intervention;

In its Article 7 Reports and in various Standing Committee meetings Uganda has always reported mine contamination in the Western and Northern parts of the country. Due to rebel insurgencies in those areas it has not been possible to carryout comprehensive surveys for demining purposes.

I wish to report in this meeting that peace has since returned to the Western part of the country and limited demining by the UPDF has already been carried out to remove mines that were obvious and those on roads and access trucks. Similarly in the North the UPDF have provided responsive clearance as to when need arises. For example in 2002 111 mines were removed and in 2003 a total of 120 mines were removed.

In the West where there is stability the government is ready to commence mapping and eventually clearance of all mines. The work is enormous the UPDF do not have the capacity to do it alone. International assistance is being sought. Previously contacts were established with Mines Advisory Group to do the mapping but conditions were not conducive then. Contacts are now being revived and not only with MAG but also other demining organizations. Updates on these efforts will be reflected in the Article 7 reports as well as in the June Intercessional meetings.

In the Northern Part of the country, however, mine clearance is not appropriate at this time as there are ongoing operations against rebels and fresh mines continue to be laid by rebels.

Mine risk education is a major activity in mine contaminated areas of Northern Uganda. In 2001, four sectors education, health and community development and defense together with AVSI an Italian NGO developed sensitization material on land mines. The material was translated into the local languages. 100 trainers of trainers were equipped with skills to teach the community on landmines. Emphasis was placed on showing actual samples of mines and bombs commonly used by the rebels. In 2002, 2,055 people; most of them teachers and community leaders were trained and they

in turn sensitized their community on landmines. UNICEF funded the education of school children. The education of the rest of the community was delayed due to lack of funds. The success in the public education resulted in increased reporting of land mines as reported earlier in this report.

The challenge facing the sensitization process is the continual awareness raising of the community to avoid laxity and complacency associated with low challenge or confrontation with landmine. The second challenge is reaching the community that is not in Internally Displaced people's camp. This community, which is affected by the rebels and yet not displaced in camps, is widespread and more expensive to reach. The government of Uganda appeals for assistance to support continual awareness raising and to spread the message to the people living outside the camps.