

**SPEECH BY HON CHRISPUS KIYONGA,  
MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE DESTRUCTION OF DECOMMISSIONED AMMUNITION AND  
ORDINANCES,**

**NAKASONGOLA, 2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2007**

*The UNDP Resident Representative,  
Your Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions here present  
The Executive Secretary Regional Centre on Small Arms,  
The Director SaferAfrica,  
The Resident District Representative Nakasongola,  
The Coordinator National Focal Point,  
Representatives from national and international development agencies  
Members of the press,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

This event has been organized to highlight the destruction of stocks of ammunition decommissioned by the Uganda Peoples Defense Forces. The occasion is also intended to draw public attention to small arms issues and the measures the Government of Uganda is taking to control arms and reduce the volumes of weapons in circulation.

In July 2003 the Government of Uganda destroyed over 6,800 assorted Anti Personal Mines. The entire stock of land mines under Government possession was destroyed in compliance with the "Ottawa Convention 1997", which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines. Uganda, thus, fulfilled her obligations under the treaty and was formally recognised as one of the states across the world that had banished the use of land mines.

In September 2005 Government carried out destruction of 3,000 small arms and light weapons at a public ceremony at Nsambya Railways Primary School Sports Ground. The ceremony that accompanied the launch of Uganda's National Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons, was designed to raise awareness about arms reduction and control measures.

The second and major destruction involving over 57,000 small arms and light weapons was carried out in May - June 2006. This was billed to be the largest single small arms destruction in Africa. The destruction was by smelting at Steel Rolling Mills, Jinja. The material obtained from smelting the arms was sold to the smelting firm for use in production of building materials.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2007, over 34,000 small arms ammunition that were recovered by Police in Mpigi District in September 2006, were destroyed by the Uganda Police.

Today we are witnessing yet another round of destruction. This time it is destruction of ammunition and ordinances consisting of an assortment of bombs, rockets, grenades, shells, etc, that have been collected over time from across the country. Altogether, over 460 tons of decommissioned, unserviceable, obsolete and seized ammunition and explosives are under destruction.

Many of these weapons were inherited from the past era, some dating several decades back, and are no longer relevant to our current needs. A large portion is State-owned weapons that have been rendered redundant through re-equipment of the armed forces. Much of the stock under destruction was captured or collected through seizures by the military and other security agencies. Much else was surrendered through voluntary, DDR and amnesty programmes.

While these explosives may be redundant stocks that are no longer required for military, their presence presents a formidable risks to the community, particularly those that work and live close to the storage facilities. Recent tragedies have occurred with massive loss of life and colossal destruction of property in Lagos, Nigeria (2006) and Maputo, Mozambique (January 2007) when ammunition storage depots exploded within the vicinity of major population centres.

Besides the direct risk of explosion there is a more complex problem that must be addressed. As you aware, Uganda and the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa as a whole, is awash with lethal weapons. There are thousands of weapons in illegal possession, in the hands of insurgents, in the hands of armed communities, such as the Karamojong warriors; and in the hands of criminals. These arms represent a direct threat to the security, political stability and economic development of Uganda and the region as whole.

Many of these weapons have come into illicit possession and misuse as a result of past political instability, armed conflicts, poor arms management practices and inflows from conflicts in the region. The leakages have occurred against a background of illicit arms transfers and trafficking due to inadequate regulation of international arms trade and transfers.

Uganda has signed a number of agreements and protocols that address the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through coordinated regional and international action. These include the United Nations Programme of Action, Bamako Declaration, Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocol. These instruments, among others, call for the adoption of effective programmes for the collection, safe storage, destruction and disposal of small arms and light weapons in state ownership.

At national level, Government has adopted a National Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons by which it is implementing a wide range of measures aimed to reduce the volume of small arms and light weapons in circulation and to prevent future proliferation.

Government is convinced that removal of weapons from circulation is an important means of removing tools of violence and crime from society thereby enhancing human security. The on-going disarmament programme in Karamoja has registered some measure of success not only in terms of the number of arms collected from the Karamoja warriors but also in terms of tangible improvements in the state of security in the region. Though incidents may still be recorded, the scale of the attacks has markedly reduced.

Substantial quantities of the arms collected in the disarmament exercise in Karamoja have been publicly destroyed as a means of confidence building among the affected community. This helps to demonstrate that weapons collected do not find their way back into illegal circulation or recycled into the hands of their enemies.

Through these arms destruction activities, Uganda is making a statement of peace. Uganda is no longer at war. This is the time to remove all weapons of war from circulation in order to make our communities safe. Action is required through effective programmes to ensure the collection, safe storage, destruction and disposal of small arms and light weapons

I must point out, however, that, the support and active participation of the members of public is essential for the success of any efforts to remove illegal arms and prevent misuse. In this regard I wish to call upon members of the public to come forth and assist security and law enforcement agencies to remove illegal weapons from our communities.

Finally, I must thank the United Nations Development Programme, the Government of the Republic of South Africa and SaferAfrica for supporting this destruction exercise with technical and financial resources. In the same vein, I wish to thank the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces and the Uganda National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons for coordinating the destruction exercise and for organizing this event.

I thank you