

**SPEECH BY MR. RICHARD NABUDERE,
COORDINATOR UGANDA NATIONAL FOCAL POINT ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS,
AT PUBLIC DESTRUCTION CEREMONY, NAKASONGOLA,
2ND NOVEMBER 2007**

*The Hon. Minister of...
Hon Ministers present,
The Chief of Defence Forces
The Inspector General of Police,
The UNDP Resident Representative,
Your Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions here present
The Director SaferAfrica,
The Resident District Representative Nakasongola,
Representatives from national and international development agencies
Members of the press,
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I am pleased to welcome you all to this important and unique ceremony.

This is the fifth among a series of small arms destruction activities to be carried out in Uganda since 2003. The first destruction involving anti-personnel mines was conducted at Kigo Prisons, signaled the beginning of a coordinated national weapons destruction programme aimed to reduce the volume of weapons in circulation and improve arms management.

Small arms reduction and control programmes are in line with the Nairobi Declaration, Nairobi Protocol and other international and regional instruments that establish measures to address the problem of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) through coordinated action.

The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF), Uganda Police Force (UPF) and other security and law enforcement agencies have fully embraced the small arms control programmes and are participating effectively in activities to promote best practices in the arms management and reduction activities.

It is against this background that both UPDF and UPF undertook a stock taking of their armories to identify and record redundant, obsolete, unserviceable and seized stocks. This was carried out to ensure proper storage or disposal in order to reduce potential risk of loss and diversion into illicit channels.

While the provision of secure storage is paramount for all weapons including redundant or captured stock, inadequate storage facilities poses challenges that exposes such stocks to loss or misuse. It is for this reason that destruction is recommended as the preferred option of disposal in order to ensure that the weapons do not fall into illegal hands. Against this background the decision by the authorities to destroy redundant weapons ensures that the arms are permanently removed from circulation.

The current destruction involves a stock pile of over 460 tons of ammunition and ordinances collected by the UPDF from different UPDF units across the country. The Uganda National Focal Point (NFP) that is coordinating the destruction exercise has established the Arms Destruction Task Force an inter-departmental technical team to plan and execute the destruction.

I am pleased to introduce Col Eric Mukasa (IGME/UPDF) who is chairman of the Task Force. Other key members include:

- ACP Henry Tukahirwa (Police Quarter Master)
- ACP Flugencio Magembe (Government Security Officer)
- Lt. Col. Stephen Muluri (IGME's Office)
- Maj. Karara (IGME's Office)
- ASP Amos Olweny (Police Anti Terrorism Unit)
- Lt. Robert Mugisa (ISO)

I commend the Task Force for the effective planning and execution of this exercise.

I wish to recognize the crucial role played by Mr. Sarel Buisj of SaferAfrica who has worked very closely with the NFP and the Destruction Task Force throughout the different stages of the project, providing technical assistance and supporting the detailed planning for activity. Besides the services of Mr. Buisj, SaferAfrica has also contributed financially to various aspects of the project.

At the current stage of destruction the Task Force has been boosted by a team of Explosives and Ordnance Demolition (EOD) experts provided by the South African Defence Forces which is extending vital technical support for the exercise, which is also using the exercise to train Ugandan explosives demolition officers.

Arms destruction costs considerable sums of money and for this reason we must commend the UNDP for providing the necessary finances for this exercise. The US Department of State likewise extended some financial support facilitating the procurement of vital materials to aid the destruction process.

The NFP will build on this accomplishment to promote activities to identify, collect and ensure safe storage and destruction of redundant, unserviceable and seized weapons in order to reduce the volume of weapons from circulation and be able to contribute to safety in our communities.