



**The Republic of Uganda**

**REMARKS BY HON SERAPIO RUKUNDO, THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES, IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA AT THE OPENING OF THE EXPERTS' MEETING OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL,**

**FRIDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2008**

The President of the 8<sup>th</sup> Governing Council

Honorable Ministers and Technical Delegates from the Party States to the Lusaka Agreement,

Distinguished Delegates from the Observer Countries and Organizations,

The Representative of the Director United Nations Environment Programme,

The Director, Lusaka Agreement Task Force,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda and on my own behalf, I am privileged and honoured to welcome your respective Delegations to Uganda and hope that you have had a comfortable stay in Uganda, a country unusually Gifted by Nature; described by Churchill as the Pearl of Africa 1908.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Uganda's geographical positioning and characterisation, and in particular the remote location of its

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Wildlife Conservation Areas in relation to its International Borders, and therefore porous nature of its boundaries, makes this country prone to high incidences of unregulated trade in wildlife resources across the borders.

Uganda is a relatively very small but very diverse country, with an area of 236,040 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 84.6% (199,710 km<sup>2</sup>) is terrestrial and 15.4% (36,330 km<sup>2</sup>) is open water. The country shares its 2,698 Km long international border with five countries in the hinterland of the Great lakes of Africa, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the West (765Km or 28.35%), Sudan on the North (435km or 16.13%), Kenya on the East (933km or 34.58%), the United Republic of Tanzania on the South (396km or 14.68%) and Rwanda on the South West (169 km or 6.26%).

This neighborliness, in the context of wildlife enforcement and monitoring, becomes very important when most of the Wildlife Conservation areas along the common borders are host to biodiversity that is unique and has high international demand. Some of these resources are shared on both sides of the common borders, thus the need for cooperation in order to protect these resources. This naturally creates a recipe for un-authorised trade in this otherwise invaluable national heritage that Uganda and the global communities must protect.

The need to establish and sustain a more effective national wildlife resource protection and sustainable use control mechanism, with a regional perspective that is focused on the actual cross-border scenario on ground, has made Uganda's membership and/or association to Regional and International Wildlife Law Enforcement protocols much more relevant today than before. This is most particularly so when the approach taken under the arrangement to protect our

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invaluable resources under this Agreement cooperatively involves all stakeholders to the problem.

You will recall that Uganda is a founding Party to the Lusaka Agreement on the Co-operative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, (1994). Having Chaired the Negotiations of the Agreement by the bureau of technical experts, March and June 1994 at Nairobi and September 1994 at Lusaka Zambia, and having participated in the Ministerial Meeting for the adoption of the Agreement by acclamation on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1994, Uganda signed the Final Act on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1994, and Ratified the Agreement on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1996. Everything that has gone on notwithstanding, Uganda still strongly identifies with the principles fundamental to the inception process, and much more firmly so now with the achievements made here at home as national effort in this regard, as well as the joint programs across our common jurisdictional borders and shared ecological systems.

Distinguished Delegates, for its small size, Uganda, among other unusual biogeographical and geo-morphological endowments, has approximately 11% of global bird species diversity and 53.9% of the Global population of Mountain Gorillas. Uganda is part of the Albertine Rift Valley where more than 35 % of Africa's Biodiversity is found, and part of the Greater Virunga Ecosystem of the Albertine Rift Valley. Aware of the above level of natural endowment of the region, Uganda has set aside 42 Wildlife Conservation Areas within its jurisdictional borders, including 10 National Parks, 13 Wildlife Reserves, 13 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 5 Community Wildlife Areas; totaling to 25,981.6 Sq Km or slightly less than 10% of Uganda's land surface.

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Aware that it is difficult to translate the benefits of wildlife enforcement for protection of the unique resource into monetary terms, just as it is for services provided by any other law enforcement agencies, Uganda notes that this specific benefits area is best placed within the context where the services sectors of national economy, of which tourism is, contributes 49% to GDP, and that currently the main tourism attraction are wildlife resources.

Whereas Uganda's participation in the implementation of Lusaka Agreement program may still be constrained by the remaining unsettled Membership Contribution Arrears, Uganda strongly remains committed to the terms of the Agreement, and has embarked on implementing its arrears recovery program, with an objective of clearing her financial arrears obligation by June 2009 (50% of dues by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008, and the outstanding balance by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009). While still focused on this formidable task, Uganda would however like to strongly draw your attention to the fact that the Agreement needs to put itself in full context of the realities of institutional and program sustainability; in light of achievements made within the national obligations, programs and responsibilities. There is a critical need to address the issue of recruiting to boost membership, to increase on constituency consent to and participation in the search for a more lasting solution to the problem, and to undermine the "liability factor of membership Contribution Problem".

Uganda wishes to thank the distinguished Parties to the Agreement, who at the 8<sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting accepted our offer to host Governing Council Meeting that starts today and will to be concluded on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008. Uganda feels privileged to be the host to the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Governing council of Ministers of Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations directed at Illegal

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trade in Wild fauna and flora. As the host Member State, and focal institution, the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry (MTTI), has on behalf of Uganda undertaken preparations for hosting of this meeting in close collaboration with the Lusaka Agreement Task Force. This was with a principle goal of making your decision making tenure at Kampala a memorable one.

Once Again Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Welcome to Uganda and after the meeting you are welcome to visit other areas in Kampala and Entebbe, including the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre which among other things serves as a Rescue and Rehabilitation centre for wildlife that is injured and or confiscated from illegal trade.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**