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STATEMENT BY

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REPUBLIC OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**TO THE SIXTH ASSEMBLY OF PARTIES TO THE
ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

**New York
3 December 2007**

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Mr. President,

My delegation is very pleased to see you chairing our sessions and we pledge our full commitment to work with you and your Bureau towards a positive outcome of our deliberations. We wish to thank you for your comprehensive report.

We also take this opportunity to thank the President of the Court and Prosecutor for their detailed and informative reports. We shall endeavour to elucidate on some of the points raised in these reports with a special emphasis to those that pertain to the situation in the LRA affected areas of Northern Uganda, Southern Sudan and the North Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Uganda holds in great regard the work of the International Criminal Court and has full confidence in the Court. Without confidence in the Court, Uganda could not have made referrals to the Prosecutor to commence investigations in the situation of the LRA in December 2003. We wish to point out that the Government has fully cooperated at all times with the Court in its investigation of crimes against humanity committed in Northern Uganda. We do not condone impunity and if any member of our armed forces is found to have committed offences, he or she will be dealt with according to law.

Uganda has every intention to continue to provide the necessary assistance to the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) and Registry in the exercise of their functions and will continue to keep the Court updated on any developments as and when they arise. Uganda remains committed to its international obligations as a State Party to the Rome Statute. Following a lengthy national consultative process Uganda's ICC Bill is in advanced stages of being incorporated into our national legislation.

Since receiving the warrants of arrest for the top five commanders of the LRA in September 2005, the Government has vigorously sought to secure the arrest of the named individuals. To this end, the Government engaged the governments of Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (the DRC) and the Central African Republic, as well as the UN Security Council and its peace making forces, MONUC and UNMIS to ensure effective cooperation and coordination in this task. These efforts succeeded in debilitating the LRA, denying them bases, and placing sustained pressure on them to the extent that the LRA could no longer remain in Northern Uganda.

Mr. President,

Last year our delegation reported to you about the peace negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the LRA which commenced in July last year.

As stated in the previous address by the Uganda delegation to the ICC Assembly of States Parties, 23 November 2006, the Government agreed to the peace negotiations not by choice but due to the inability of States Parties and the rest of the international community to provide the support necessary to secure the arrest and surrender of the four remaining indictees to the ICC. International cooperation which is crucial in any effort to secure arrest, has not been forthcoming as it should have. In the situation of the LRA all remaining indictees are outside the territory of Uganda.

Since the issuance of the warrants of arrest, the indictees have been operating in at least three countries all of which have undertaken to cooperate with the ICC. Without international cooperation, the indictees may never be arrested and brought before the Court.

The Government notes that the ICC warrants of arrest against the LRA senior commanders have, and continue to, exert significant pressure on the LRA and their supporters. This has contributed to bringing the LRA to the peace talks currently taking place in Juba, Southern Sudan.

May I inform further that as a result of the Juba talks peace, security and stability now reign in Northern Uganda and most people in the IDP Camps are returning to their homes. Both the Court and the Security Council have been regularly briefed on the progress of the talks.

During the peace talks there has been a decrease in LRA attacks against civilians in Uganda, Southern Sudan and the DRC. It is this enhanced peace and security that the Government, with the support of the international community, is seeking to consolidate and defend. This context has allowed for the delivery of some of the benefits long denied the people of Northern and Eastern Uganda. The peace talks are monitored, among others, by the UN Secretary General's Special representative, Mr. Joachim Chissano. The talks are being held outside Uganda. Therefore, it should not be taken as if Uganda has control over the indictees and, is refusing to hand them over to the Court.

The Security Council welcomed the recent positive steps in the peace process and it reiterated its support for a negotiated settlement and the hope for an expeditious conclusion to the peace process. The Security Council also stressed that anyone responsible for serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law must be brought to justice and Uganda fully supports this call.

We are now looking at post Juba and we have launched a Peace, Recovery and Development Plan which will address the issue of underdevelopment in Northern Uganda. Nonetheless, the Government reiterates its commitment to the Rome Statute and will ensure that any negotiated settlement shall take into account the principles and demands of justice.

We note the Prosecutor's concerns including his request to be furnished with details on crimes allegedly committed by elements of the Government forces. This provides us with an opportunity to inform the Court and the Assembly on the steps that Government has taken to investigate these allegations.

Investigations into the allegations clearly revealed that some errant soldiers acting outside the mandate of the Army and their superiors committed crimes against ordinary citizens in the LRA affected regions. These soldiers have been subjected to our domestic judicial system. Any others who might be found in violation of the law will be similarly dealt with. Our judicial system is very strict, and the consequences for the perpetrators can be very costly. There is no impunity tolerated by the UPDF.

Mr. President,

On the issue of geographical representation and gender balance in the recruitment of ICC staff my delegation would like to ensure that nationals of all States Parties are given equal opportunity to staff the Court. The system of recruitment should not be based on how much a State Party contributes to the Court as the Court is an independent judicial institution. All situation countries that the Prosecutor is handling are presently from least developed countries where the Court is supposed to provide justice because justice is being denied. We are also concerned about the need to achieve gender balance, and we call upon the Court to increase the recruitment of female professional staff especially in the higher positions.

On a different note Mr. President, Uganda has indicated its readiness and willingness to host the Review Conference in Kampala. Uganda is proud to have successfully concluded the recent Commonwealth Heads of States Meeting (CHOGM), hosting over 50 Government delegations including over 30 Heads of States. Many delegations observed that this particular CHOGM was extremely well organised. The Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Attorney General will be arrive later this week to provide an overview of Uganda's readiness and ability to host the Review Conference.

Another issue that is of prime importance to my delegation is that of the Victims Trust Fund. We applaud the Board and the Executive Director of the Trust Fund for their efforts to secure assistance to the victims in Northern Uganda. We are indeed, grateful for the assistance given to those victims that were brutally mutilated at the hands of the LRA. Thus the victims are enabled to get a better life and, in many instances, literally a better face. We fully support the objectives of the Trust Fund and encourage States, individuals and organisations to make further donations to enable the Fund to assist the increasing number of victims in many countries. Uganda fully endorses the recommendations of the CBF regarding the proposed amendments to the Regulations of the Fund which would enable the Fund to operate more effectively and in a significantly visible manner.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

Achieving peace, security and justice for those who have suffered is a common objective, shared by the Government, the ICC and the international community as a whole. The Government is steadfast in its commitment to cooperate with the ICC to ensure that those responsible for the heinous crimes perpetrated by the LRA will be held accountable.

My delegation remains convinced that international cooperation is crucial to the arrest of the four remaining indictees and that there will be no impunity.

I thank you.