**STATEMENT ON DESERT LOCUST CONTROL OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN UGANDA**

**PRESENTED ON MARCH 18TH, 2020**

**AT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES OFFICES, ENTEBBE**

***(Prepared by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries)***

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1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1. Food and Agriculture Organization – Country Representative, Colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Members of the Media Fraternity present today – I take this opportunity to welcome you to the Ministry Headquarters and wish you a good morning!
   2. Five weeks ago, Uganda was invaded by Desert Locust Swarms from neighbouring Kenya through Amudat and to-date we have 24 districts in the 6 sub-regions of Acholi, Karamoja, Lango, Sebei, Teso and Bugisu that have been reported sightings of the desert locusts.
   3. While natural disasters capture headlines and national attention in the short-term; the work of recovery and rebuilding is long-term. My statement today provides an update on the current status of the desert locusts in the country and control activities carried out by the Government of Uganda together with other partners including FAO, DLCO to return the situation in the affected communities to normalcy
2. **SITUATION OF DESERT LOCUSTS IN UGANDA**
   1. Uganda has so far recorded the entry of 9 swarms of mature Desert locusts. These swarms have not caused significant damage to the vegetation cover. The eminent danger to food security and livelihoods however is posed by the newly hatched nymphs and young desert locusts that have a high need for food with each locust swarm consuming close to 100 tons of vegetation per day.
   2. A swarm spreading about 6 square kilometres was observed on 12th Match 202 in Masike, Kangole Town Council near Kangole Girls Primary School in Karamoja sub-region. Control measures undertaken by the UPDF, however, suppressed the swarm.
   3. Technical Surveillance teams in the region continue to receive reports of Desert Locust hatching in Agago, Ngora, Sironko and Bukwo. However, site visits by technical teams confirmed presence of Variegated Grass hoppers and not locusts. Other reports of hatching in Amudat and Nakapiripirit have been proved to be false by the surveillance team. No hatching of the Desert Locust eggs has been observed yet in the country as of 13th March 2020.
   4. This week, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is training an additional 100 Agricultural Extension Officers in addition to 450 already trained from Karamoja and Teso sub-regions. These officers are being trained on desert locust identification, behaviour, management and Control. This is intended to build capacity of the key stakeholders in management and control of the pest targeting teams not previously trained.
   5. I would like to appreciate our partners in DLCO that heeded our cry for trans-boundary control activities and as such the DLCO EA aircraft is still in Lodwar, Turkana Kenya for transboundary control while at the same time ready for relocation to Uganda to control the swarms that may warrant aerial spraying.
3. **INTERVENTIONS** 
   1. Government through the ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries has fast tracked the procurement of appropriate equipment and chemicals. On 11th March 2020, another 1000 litres of Fenitrothion 96% ULV was received from Twiga Chemicals – Kenya. The total Amount of Fenitrothion 96% ULV is so far 1400 litres out of 10000 litres that was ordered. 18000 litres of Emulsifiable Concentrate (EC) for ground spraying was procured and 2000 sets of Personal protective gear and these are being used by field teams.
   2. Government has so far procured and dispatched 500 motorised spray pumps and 2000 Knapsack spray pumps with an assortment of Protective Equipment’s. Ground control operations have been conducted in all the 24 districts to minimise the spread of mature egg laying desert locusts.
   3. Government has so far mobilised UGX 22 Billion from its treasury and various development partners have come on board to facilitate implementation of Desert Locust Control plan.
   4. Eleven Billion Uganda Shillings (UGX 11.1 billion) was paid as the arrears to Desert Locust Control Organization (DLCOEA). UGX 2.8 Billion was spent on aerial spraying pesticides, 1.2 billion was spent on pumps, UGX 1.39 Billion was paid for UPDF operations while 1.2 Billion on operational expenses. The 3.6 Billion has been committed for Aircraft operations and UGX 0.71 Billion is the current balance being used on current activities.
   5. An additional UGX 16.18 Billion is being mobilised from the treasury to enhance UPDF and Desert Locust Control activities; support district local governments control efforts and to intensify sensitisation and awareness creation, surveillance and mapping activities.
   6. MAAIF technical teams with support of the National consultant and in collaboration with experts from Desert Locusts Control Organisation for Eastern Africa (DLCOEA), Food and Agricultural organisation (FAO) and National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) have continued to build capacity of the UPDF, Extension Workers, Uganda Wild Life Authority staff and District Local Government.
   7. To-date 2,045 UPDF soldiers, 85 UWA staff, 385 Extension workers and 450 other district local government staff have been trained and deployed.
4. **DEVELOPMENT PARTNER SUPPORT**
   1. We have received support from both UN agencies and other Development Partners during implementation of the Desert Locust control interventions.
   2. Under the tenets of a Technical Cooperation Project, FAO is supporting Desert Locust Control activities to the tune of US$500,000 and through regional efforts will further enhance this support. FAO continues to provide expertise helpful in Desert Locust control activities. In addition, FAO has donated 4 double cabin vehicles with vehicle mounted spray equipment, 10 motorized sprayers, 10 knapsack sprayers, 100 assorted protective gear including; helmets, overalls, safety googles, gumboots all for demonstration purposes.
   3. World Food program provided 5 (five) fully serviced trucks which are being used for logistics in the control operations. They have also provided a number of mobile stores for the equipment in the field.
   4. The Government of Bulgaria has offered His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda an Air craft to support aerial control activities through spraying. The Bulgarian government will be responsible for the supply of chemicals, fuel and accommodation for the crew. It is currently being configured to locust spraying before it is brought in the Country.
   5. Others Partners include African Development Bank, World Bank, Bill Gates and Melinda Foundation who have equally promised support. Details of the exact figures from each of these partners will be provided when the requisite approvals and disbursements have been approved.
5. **MAJOR CHALLENGES**
   1. Specialised pesticide formulation for aerial spraying (Fenitrothion 96% ULV) is a challenge to obtain due to the current wave of desert locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa, Middle East and the Eastern Africa Region.
   2. In addition to the shortage of the recommended aerial spraying pesticide, the Nose Masks (N95) are hard to find as there is stiff competition with Corona virus. Suppliers informed us that Chinese have been buying these masks from Uganda due to shortages in their country.
   3. There is also challenge of Desert Locusts invasion into Kidepo Valley National Park. MAAIF is engaging Uganda Wildlife Authority to support mapping out of possible settlement of DL to prepare for spot control.

**7.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Uganda still continues to experience further invasions from Kenya. We are reliably informed that some of those areas in Kenya previously invaded have newly hatched hoppers. There is urgent need to engage Kenya Government on the possibility of joint operations for ground spraying to ensure that the newly hatched hoppers do not reach maturity and swarm into Uganda.

I appeal to the general public to prepare to plant crops for the season A, 2020 since government has put in place measures to ensure that the crops will be protected from the Desert Locust.

**PIUS WAKABI KASAJJA**

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES**

**March 18, 2020**