

SPEECH BY HON. MINISTER OF STATE FOR ANIMAL INDUSTRY, HONOURABLE MAJOR BRIGHT RWAMIRAMA AT THE OPENING SESSION FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS' INCEPTION WORKSHOP FOR THE AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN AT HOTEL TRIANGLE, 27TH – 28TH MARCH 2008

- The Food and Agriculture Organization Representative in Kampala
- The World Health Organisation Representative in Kampala
- The Representative of the USAID
- The Manager, Regional Animal Health Centre for East Africa
- Dear Participants
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honour and pleasure to host all of you distinguished participants at the opening ceremony of yet another inception workshop for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

This workshop is of special significance to all of us because HPAI was confirmed in Africa early 2006 (Nigeria), later confirmed just next door to us in Southern Sudan (September 2006) with which we share the same common border and our people move and trade freely between our two sister countries. The volume of trade between the two countries has recently increased tremendously especially so on poultry and poultry products. The recent spread of outbreaks in Ghana, Togo and Benin demonstrate that the HPAI threat is not over yet. We are aware of the 20 humans who have lost their lives in Egypt because of the disease.

The global outlook for 2007 last quarter indicated an increase in outbreaks in Bangladesh, Benin, Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Israel, India, Turkey, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Myanmar, Poland, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and Vietnam. Most of the outbreaks have been mainly in domestic poultry.

I am glad that this project will increase our surveillance and monitoring efforts to contain possible outbreaks.

Let me express the governments' appreciation to USAID and FAO for the continuous support they have provided in the fight against Avian Influenza since 2006. This is a demonstration of solidarity with our government.

Indeed as you may already be aware, Uganda, like many other developing countries in Africa has an economy that still largely depends on agriculture, with livestock currently contributing about 5% of the GDP and about 14% of the Agricultural GDP. More than 60% of the rural households derive their

livelihood from livestock, in one way or another. Recent studies in Uganda have shown that livestock husbandry is a more viable entry point to poverty alleviation and has a high potential for the economic development of the country. This is particularly so if emphasis is concentrated on poultry with its high turnover.

I would like to thank and request all of you delegates who have devoted your time to participate and review the project document. This workshop should critically look into the ongoing programmes on Avian Influenza and harmonize activities to utilize the available resources better. This harmonized approach will consequently benefit the veterinary services, human health and the poultry sector in this region in order to enrich and strengthen existing and future strategies for control and eradication of HPAI.

As I end, I would like to pledge Uganda's commitment and support to all your deliberations and thank USAID and FAO in the noble global cause to minimise the threat of HPAI and improving livelihoods, and to reiterate that it is only through commitment and concerted effort by all stakeholders that the world can hope of controlling and eradication of HPAI. This demonstrates the Global concern and dedication to fight the HPAI Pandemic.

I thank you all and wish all of you fruitful deliberations and declare this workshop open.

For God and Country,

Honourable Major Bright Rwamirama
MINISTER OF STATE FOR ANIMAL INDUSTRY