

UK Statement: Clearance of Mined Areas
25 June 2015

Mr President,

1. Firstly, please allow me to thank the Committee on the Implementation of Article 5 for their collegiate and collaborative approach, and in particular for their valuable comments, which we will take into full consideration.
2. As States Parties are aware, the only mined areas under the United Kingdom's jurisdiction or control are on the Falkland Islands. Please allow me to provide a brief update regarding the United Kingdom's implementation of its Article 5 obligations there.
3. The fourth phase of demining operations on the Islands commenced in January of this year. Due to challenging weather conditions which occur every austral winter, the project paused at the end of April. By that time, nine mined areas had either been cancelled or cleared.
4. The project will recommence in September of this year, and is due to complete a further fifteen mined areas by the end of December. This means a minimum of 24 mined areas should be completed in 2015. This represents a significant step forward in meeting the UK's mine clearance obligations.
5. Once this phase of operations has finished, no more than 83 suspect hazardous areas will remain. However, there are several challenges to demining in the Falkland Islands. These include the geographical location of the islands, adverse weather conditions, concerns about the environmental impact of demining, incomplete Argentine minefield records, and the tough financial climate. These factors will become increasingly significant as the later phases of demining address increasingly remote and technically and logistically challenging minefields. We note also the very limited social and economic impact of the remaining minefields, particularly those in remote locations.
6. We are reviewing how we may address these challenges as we seek to fulfil our Article 5 obligations, and we are currently considering how we will continue with the next phase of demining without a significant delay.
7. Finally, the United Kingdom Government conducted exploitation of mines recovered during Phases 1, 2 and 4 of demining on the Falkland Islands. These reports are available on the United Kingdom's page of the ISU website. These reports are specific to particular mines which were laid on the Falkland Islands, but may be of broader interest to the mine action community with regard to the effects of ageing and weathering on these types of mines.

Thank you.