

OTTAWA INTERSESSIONAL MEETING, 8 – 9 June 2017

UK OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

Thank you Madam President,

I must first point out that the UK held a General Election yesterday, 8 June. Until we have a new Government in place the statement I am about to make sets out the long-standing British view on international cooperation and assistance in Mine Action.

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, and will make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Long after a conflict finishes, anti-personnel mines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to devastate people's lives. Around the world today, millions of people live alongside land littered by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other ERW. This is a major threat to the immediate physical safety and longer-term development of communities: millions of people are prevented from using agricultural land or accessing essential services, such as health and education. Freedom of movement is curtailed; the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees prevented, and the delivery of humanitarian aid obstructed.

The UK has played an historic role in tackling the indiscriminate and lethal legacy of landmines as a founding signatory of the Mine Ban Treaty twenty years ago. UK organisations are at the forefront of global efforts. But there is still more to do.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention, the UK is increasing its support to tackle landmines. On 4 April, the UK Secretary of State for International Development announced that the UK will spend £100

million over the next three years to tackle the problem of landmines and ERW. This support will clear and make safe 150 square kilometres of land, help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines, and ensure that every year, over 100,000 people – especially children – fully understand the dangers posed by landmines and how to avoid them.

With this funding, we will focus on countries where the greatest numbers of people continue to suffer from landmine contamination; where we can have the biggest impact; and where continued insecurity and instability pose an ongoing threat to UK interests. This means countries including Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Angola. We will keep this list of locations under review and flexible.

In particular we will support work in current conflict zones like Syria when conflict subsides and access improves. Daesh is cynically using explosive devices to target civilians directly, especially those who hope to return to their homes after a period of displacement. Clearing these booby-traps and improvised landmines will be a key element of helping displaced people return home safely and rebuild their lives.

This increased funding builds further on DfID's existing £30 million Global Mine Action Programme that runs from July 2014 to August 2017 and aims to reduce the humanitarian and development impact of landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) including cluster munitions. Through GMAP the UK Government aims to improve the safety and security of local communities and internally displaced people who are living, working or transitioning through hazardous areas.

In total eight GMAP countries received funding in 2016 including Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, South Sudan, Somalia, Burma and Zimbabwe. In 2016, GMAP cleared over 14 million square metres of land; reduced over 4 million square metres and cancelled a further 89 million square metre through efficient land release techniques. Our mine risk education programmes reached nearly 115 thousand people.

In addition to mine action support in Iraq, Ukraine and Sri Lanka, the UK funds a £7m mine action programme in Afghanistan, delivered by HALO,

AfghanAid and the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees. It is anticipated that the programme will clear 10km² and deliver more than 2,000 mine risk education sessions to affected communities.

This work contributes towards meeting the 2015 UK Aid Strategy commitment to spend 50% of official development assistance on fragile and conflict affected countries. The UK's mine action efforts have been an important component of its commitment to reach the target of spending 0.7% of gross national income on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The UK attaches a great deal of importance to gender-awareness in its mine action and explosive remnants of war programmes. To ensure our programmes benefit women, girls, men and boys we collect disaggregated data and use this to develop our project design. The UK also has an increasing focus on supporting people with disabilities. This includes ensuring that development programmes adequately include disabled people throughout programme design, delivery and monitoring. We do not discriminate against, or among, persons with disabilities, whether they be victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions, armed conflict generally, or disabled through illness, accident or other causes. Support should be non-discriminatory and should aim to improve capacity in a sustainable manner.

UK funding and that from many other countries allows us to reach those areas suffering from the effects of armed conflict, which gets to the heart of what our Convention is all about – tackling the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines and other ERW, so that civilians can live their lives free of fear and risk.

In closing, the UK has always been a strong supporter of the Convention's goals. I thank you for your leadership in helping us achieve them.

Thank you.