

Comments on the United Kingdom's extension request Intersessional Meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty

7-8 June 2018

The UK's second extension request is for five years, and this appears to be a reasonable amount of time. The request provides a clear rationale for the requested time period, and outlines the planned activities and available capacities. We welcome the provision of much more information than had previously been given to States Parties about how the UK intends to address the remaining contamination in the Falkland Islands.

Among the positive points:

- A detailed overview has been presented of progress made and challenges faced in the clearance of mines since the UK joined the Mine Ban Treaty.
- The UK now has a fully funded programme in place until March 2020. Funding has increased and demining has accelerated in the current phase.
- A detailed explanation of the remaining survey and clearance tasks, with timelines, has been provided to the extent of the UK's current ability.
- The UK has the required capacity to complete demining according to international standards, and we note that the two companies that have been contracted to work in the Falkland Islands have valuable knowledge of the challenging operational environment.
- An environmental impact assessment has been conducted, and measures taken to protect the flora, fauna and fragile terrain.

The following points will require updates from the authorities in the coming years:

As yet, the UK is unable to state the exact costs and timeline required for the completion of demining, because a technical survey must be conducted in Yorke Bay area. We note that the UK commits to provide updated information on survey results and clearance plans at future meetings of States Parties. We urge the UK to share this information at the earliest opportunity.

For the extended period, the UK said that "funding will be weighed against competing priorities and subject to approval at senior levels." We trust that the government will approve all the expenditure required in a timely manner, in order for the UK to meet its treaty obligations as early as possible.

When reporting on progress during the extended period, it would be helpful for authorities to disaggregate data on the amount of square meters released through non-technical survey, technical survey, and clearance.

Finally, we would note again that this is a very substantive extension request and we appreciate that it presents a clear plan of action for the fulfilment of the UK's obligations under Article 5 of this treaty.