

## UK STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5, CLEARANCE OF MINED AREAS

Mr President,

In the context of reporting on Article 5 implementation, I would like to make a statement on behalf of the United Kingdom's recent efforts in implementing its obligations under Article 5.

In February this year I led a cross-UK Government team to the Falkland Islands to assess the mined areas that exist there. This is the only territory under UK jurisdiction and control which is contaminated by anti-personnel landmines.

I saw at first hand the results of the successful de-mining pilot project undertaken in 2009 - 2010. The de-mining teams cleared 1,246 anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, 2 sub munitions and 9 other pieces of explosive remnants of war in sensitive environmental and harsh climatic conditions over 6 months in 4 separate sites. The main contractor and De-mining Programme Office worked hard to build confidence with the community on safety and protection of the land, flora and fauna. At 2 sites: Surf Bay and Sapper Hill fences remain in place to allow the vegetation to recover from the impact of clearance work. I walked behind those fences and saw evidence that regeneration is happening but due to the harsh climate it is slow.

Volunteers have been allowed access to replant sites with a variety of indigenous species and we expect the fences to be removed altogether in the near future. Protection of the Islands' fragile eco-systems during and post-clearance remains an important issue.

My visit was during the austral summer, but even then the winds were high and the weather was inclement. Having experienced a small taste of the Islands beautiful but wild and rugged terrain and difficult climate I have an even greater admiration for the Zimbabwean and Lebanese de-miners who completed the clearance in the appalling conditions during the Island's worst summer for 30 years. These factors will continue to make clearance a difficult, dangerous and costly task.

I spoke to members of the Falkland Islands Government and local community, who, despite initial reservations, found the de-mining pilot project experience positive. They were particularly appreciative of the extensive community outreach programmes undertaken by the contractor and the De-mining Programme Office. Time spent explaining methodology and answering questions, not to mention a completion walk-over demonstration by the contractors and Foreign Office officials, was invaluable in building community confidence in the project.

However, whilst the Falkland Islanders understand the UK's obligations under this Convention, there is still a wide feeling locally that UK money is better spent assisting those countries where anti-personnel mines and other ERW present a real humanitarian and developmental risk. I saw for myself that the clearly marked minefields in the sparsely-populated Falkland Islands do not represent a danger to the lives or livelihoods of the people of the Falkland Islands. In short, they do not present a humanitarian risk.



In the context of our obligations under Article 5 paragraph 2 on perimeter marking, monitoring and protection, I also met the Joint Service Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment responsible for the disposal of explosive remnants of war which occasionally come to light and for overseeing the maintenance of the minefield fences and the successful mine risk education programmes given to the community and visitors. As ERW is found much less frequently these days, these duties are now being undertaken by the Explosive Ordnance Team at Mount Pleasant Airbase. The new arrangements will continue to deliver a high level of commitment to risk reduction education and the safety of local communities.

Mr President,

During my visit I discussed the planned next phase of work for this pilot project with the Falkland Islands Government. In order to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced in the Falkland Islands and the very limited funding available, we are exploring land release methods on a designated Suspect Hazardous Area. Land release is core to mine action work and widely recognised as a way to declare land safe by using technical and non-technical techniques to suspect hazardous areas, only using the more expensive and time-consuming clearance techniques when no other technique is appropriate.

We visited two potential sites in February, one at the Murrell Peninsular, some 4 kilometres as the crow flies from the capital, Stanley, but significantly further by road; the other behind the Stanley Common Fence, which borders the capital. The Murrell Peninsular is unpopulated, and clearance would not enhance the development of the wider Stanley community in terms of safety, economy or leisure. During my discussions with the Falkland Islands Government it became clear that there was a strong appetite for a project that would deliver tangible community benefits. The Stanley Common Fence area had been used extensively for recreational purposes before the 1982 conflict and there was general agreement at the meetings that re-gaining access to this area would be popular with residents.

The successful contractor will use land release processes in accordance with International Mine Action Standards to confirm the presence of the minefields and accurately define their extent, fence them on all sides and then confirm that the other land within the designated area is free from ERW and safe for release to public use. The identification of the exact location and extent of the minefields in this area will be useful for subsequent clearance programmes.

The procurement processes are now underway for a main contractor to undertake this land release and a De-mining Programme Office to provide quality control and assurance, and community confidence building measures. We will up-date States Parties, on the progress of this 2nd phase of our pilot project at the Meeting of States Parties in late November.

Mr President,

The Ottawa Convention is a humanitarian treaty and the UK strongly supports it in that context. The results and lessons learned from this second pilot project will be added to those from the 2009/10 project. We will continue to share our experiences with the mine action community and of course this growing bank of

data will inform future projects, and help build confidence in de-mining and land release work within the Falkland Islands. The UK will continue to assist communities in the poorest and most heavily mine affected countries where development is impeded and civilian casualties are a continuing reality. To that end, through the Department for International Development, the UK will continue to contribute in excess of £10 million each year to those mine action programmes until 2013.

Thank you Mr President.